GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE
April 2019

寶塔千兩茶

深黑色的河流

HUNAN
1,000-TAEL TEA

Contents

Issue 87 / April 2019

GLOBAL TEA HUT
TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

PAGODA 寶塔

This is another exciting chance to take a long and rich journey through one of our favorite genres of tea: black tea. And Qian Liang tea is one of the deepest and most rewarding teas in the whole genre. This month is also a wonderful excuse to blow the dust off our cauldrons and boil up some amazing tea, letting steam rise around the world!

Love is changing the world bowl by bowl

FEATURES 精彩文章

TRADITIONS

recycled & recyclable

Soy ink

From the editor

In April, the weather turns warm in Taiwan, and the very first teas are being harvested. We like to imagine all the tea mountains we have visited and drink last year's teas up before the new harvest comes in, both to celebrate last year's bounty, and for reference when we do start choosing teas for the coming year. Of course, this month the Center is closed as we get ready to leave on the Annual Global Tea Hut trip, guiding dozens of lovely Chajin to tea mountains. Don't worry—we will take you all with us in spirit, raising many cups and bowls to all of you along the way, and also thoroughly documenting the trip with lots of photography and videography!

We often express our gratitude for your ongoing support. Through this magazine, we maintain our free tea Center, Tea Sage Hut, offering around ten free ten-day courses a year, attended by people from all over the world who come to learn about Cha Dao. All of your purchases at the Light Meets Life store are also a big help, as we slowly gather the resources we need to move towards building a permanent Tea Center, architected from the ground up to serve generations of Chajin in their exploration of tea in all its facets. Brick by brick, we are all building this Center and a global family to fill it. Watching this unfold is inspiring and drives us to work harder.

This month, I also wanted to remind all of you that we re-invest some of the proceeds from Global Tea Hut into Global Tea Hut itself. Not all of the contributions given for this magazine and tea go to the Center. We use some to get new photography equipment, for taking photography courses and improving our own photographic skills, both in camera and in post-processing. We also continually study and learn better graphic design skills, evolving this magazine more towards the spirit of Tea and the vision we have of where it should progress. We have never strived to make this a pop magazine, with boxes and flashy, easy-to-read little bubbles of color. There is nothing wrong with such magazines, of course; they are just not our vision. We strive to create a magazine that is minimal, Zen and tea-inspired—with the bare minimum of decorative elements and all carefully placed. We hope to reduce the experience to inspiring photography and text. Obviously, there is still a long way to go, and much we can improve upon. If you have any ideas or criticism, we would love to hear from you.

Unlike many magazines, we want ours to be text heavy. This is a content-driven magazine, with no ads. We hope that there is more information and wisdom than one can read in a month, inviting you to return to past issues. These magazines will be a valuable online resource for Chajin now and in the future, especially since they are free. The text and photography should dance together, simply, gracefully and harmoniously like water and leaves to make a nice golden liquor steaming by the windowsill.

We will continue to invest in translations. We have never aimed to make this magazine a mouthpiece of our tradition of tea. We have Tea Sage Hut for that (and one day, Light Meets Life). This magazine is meant to explore all areas of tea, and from many angles, offering different (sometimes even contradictory) perspectives, all with the aim of providing English readers with as full and rich of a tea education as possible. For that, we have access to some dense and deep libraries of Chinese authorship to choose from and an excellent team of skilled translators and editors to make the transition smooth. We will continue to invest more time, energy and money at a pace with the growth of this community, striving to provide translations in almost every issue, including modern and classical voices. In the future, we will also branch out into Japanese and Korean as well, bringing some of the powerful, deep and rich tea wisdom from those languages to English in the same way we have from Chinese. This is further inspiration for you to help us spread the word about Global Tea Hut, as increases in membership will result in a better magazine for you.

Finally, we also want to invest more and more in journalism, traveling to tea-growing regions and writing about the people, history and production of special tea regions—not to mention sharing rare and precious teas with you. Pagoda is the perfect example of this. Hunan Thousand Tael tea is a wonderfully unique tea that is little known in the West. This is the largest English publication on the subject to date. This is our tenth such "largest English publication" on a tea subject, proof that we are, indeed, growing in the right direction. May this continue and blossom, as the spring buds of glorious jade-bright tea leaves are doing right now as you read this!

–Further Reading–

This month, we highly recommend re-reading the boiled tea guide from April 2018, where you can learn about how to boil this month's tea in various ways. You may also want to re-read some other black tea issues, on Liu Bao, Liu An or the Fu Cha discussed in the boiled tea issue.

Tea of the Month

Over the course of this month, we will be drinking Qian Liang (千兩) or Thousand Tael black tea. Thousand Tael tea is a type of black tea from Anhua. It's also known as Hua Juan (花卷) Tea, named after a type of twisted steamed bread roll. Qian Liang tea is shaped into long cylindrical rolls of tea. Each cylinder is 1.5 meters long and 68 centimeters in circumference, and weighs 36.25 kilograms. In times past, the tea was shaped this way, then wrapped up for ease of transport. Early on, this tea was made into "Hundred Tael" tea rolls, which weighed (you guessed it) one hundred taels. (A tael, or liang, is a measure of weight. At the time these teas were being made, one liang was equal to about 36.25 modern-day grams.) Later, the weight increased to a thousand taels per cylinder, and the tea became known as Hua Juan or Thousand Tael Tea—Qian Liang Cha. Qian Liang Tea must be made from authentic Anhua tea leaves, and the raw leaf must not contain any tea stems or other debris. Aside from the need to preserve the quality of the raw leaf, its most distinguishing feature is the processing method.

Our Tea of the Month comes from the Bai Sha Xi Tea Factory (白沙溪茶廠) in Anhua, Hunan, which was founded in 1939. The "White Sand Creek" factory is smaller than the main factory in Hunan, called the "Anhua Tea Factory (安化茶廠)." Teas from the larger factory that are made in a traditional way are beyond the budget of Global Tea Hut to share, but we do recommend branching out and trying some of the different types of Qian Liang black tea on your own. In general, Hunanese black tea is one of the safest types of tea environmentally. The unique environment and processing of the tea from the old mountain gardens, as well as the relatively low prices compared to other types of Chinese teas, means that there are rarely any fertilizers or pesticides used in the production of these teas. There are more clean teas within this type of tea than other types, in other words.

Puerh and black tea are arguably the most ageable genres of tea, as they both oxidize and ferment post-production. This means that the older they are, the better. Both these processes are basically breaking down the cells, collapsing them and squeezing out the juices, making for a darker, richer and more aromatic tea liquor. On an energetic level, the tea is developing wisdom and Qi, which catalyzes healing movement in us when we drink it. Our Tea of the Month has been aged since 2007 in a large tower in Anhua, covered in one of the traditional storage facilities within the factory. The age lends this tea breadth and reduces the astringency and bite of young black tea or puerh. In order to facilitate the post-production fermentation of most black teas and puerh, the de-enzyming (殺菁, *sha qing*) is usually done to a much lesser degree (lower temperature and duration), since these enzymes are important in the aging process. However, this also means that these teas are more bitter and astringent than other types, since the de-enzyming reduces this when done more fully. Though our Tea of the Month could certainly use more aging, the ten years have brought enough breadth that it is becoming drinkable, especially when boiled.

To make Qian Liang tea more viable in the market, most producers have increased the types of production, including smaller cakes, baskets, bricks and loose-leaf tea. We wanted a tea that was traditionally produced, yet convenient to break up and share with all of you around the world. Fortunately, most of the factories will saw the tea into disks for you, and often sell these cakes wrapped like puerh, which more tea lovers are familiar with. We therefore had the large towers sawed down into more manageable cakes. (We are also offering cakes of this month's tea in this year's Light Meets Life fundraiser, which you can read more about on pp. 49-50.)

Pagoda is a wonderful tea to be enjoyed when you have a lot of time on your hands for a long session. It is very patient, and has a strong energy that is expansive—growing sensitive to your environment if you let it. The liquor is light and sweet with metallic undertones and a slight pine-smokiness from the drying process, which is done over a pine-wood fire. We find that unlike most teas, it is the latter steepings/boils of this amazing tea that are the best—the deeper you go into the leaves, the smoother and more rewarding the cups and bowls it offers.

Pagoda (寶塔)

Anhua, Hunan, China

2007 Qian Liang Black Tea

Han Chinese

~1,500 Meters

A Deeper Session

Further Exploration into Our Tea of the Month

Over the course of this month we will be taking a deep dive into Qian Liang (千兩), or Thousand Tael black tea, boiling away endless bowls as we read in-depth explorations of the folklore, geography, history and processing of this magical tea. There is so much richness in Hunanese black tea that we had to edit down our work to fit it into this magazine, and so we may have to return to the topic again in future issues. To start our journey, we would like to focus on a general introduction to black tea and Qian Liang tea and then discuss the wonderfully interesting and unique processing of this special tea. We would like to thank Yan Jie (顏婕) for her extraordinary help in deciphering the complicated processing of Qian Liang tea; without her contributions, this exploration wouldn't be possible.

Once again, we are committed to correcting the red tea/black tea mistake. It is important to understand that what most Westerners call "black tea" is actually "red tea." Ordinarily, it doesn't matter what something is called, but in this case there is another kind of Chinese tea that is called "black tea." So if you call red tea "black tea," then what do you call black 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, due to the general lack of information in the West for the first few hundred years tea was traded. Another layer to 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 (except some roasting). Buying through middlemen in broken pidgin English, you can 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.

The basic difference between red and black tea is that red tea is heavily oxidized through prolonged withering and rolling during production, and black tea is artificially fermented post-production. This usually happens through piling, which is akin to composting. Local bacteria are important in the post-production artificial fermentation of black tea, which means that it is a very regional kind of tea—its terroir includes the micro-environment, along with the trees, soil, weather and other natural elements. Red tea, on the other hand, is the only genre of tea that is truly a production methodology, which can therefore be applied to any varietal/cultivar. You can make great red tea out of any type of leaf, from buds to mature leaves.

5/ Pagoda (Bao Ta, 寶塔) Qian Liang Black Tea

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 mistakenly terms a concept, category or idea from another culture, then it is the foreign culture's responsibility to correct the mistake, which demonstrates 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 among those who care—among 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... 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.

Types of Black Tea

Black tea is the most varied genre of all the seven genres of tea. It is difficult to even talk about, and we often skim over it in lectures covering all seven genres since each and every tea in this category is so unique. What they all have in common, of course, is post-production artificial fermentation, which is usually achieved through piling. When we say that the fermentation is "artificial," we are not referring to the metabolic process, which is obviously natural, but merely to the fact that the fermentation is induced by human intervention. Aside from the post-production fermentation, however, each of the teas in the black tea category are more different than they are alike.

Perhaps the most prominent of all black teas is Liu Bao (六堡), from Guangxi. We discussed that magical tea in depth in the December 2015, 2016 and 2017 issues. Liu Bao has a rich and magical heritage. There is also Liu An tea from Anhui, which is unlike all other types of black tea. We covered Liu An tea in the March 2017 issue. There are also low-quality bricks of black tea from Szechuan, mostly exported to Tibet, which we haven't yet discussed in Global Tea Hut, but may one day turn to. (It is usually a very inferior type of tea and difficult to find a nice version. Traditionally, it was made from leftover tea leaves.)

Finally, there were traditionally three types of black tea produced in Hunan: *fu cha* (茯茶), which is the brick tea we covered in the April 2018 issue (Tea of the Month article); *Qian Liang* tea (千兩茶), which are giant logs of tea that are taller than a man; and *Tian Jian* (天尖) tea, which could be translated as "Heavenly Tip" or "Heavenly Basket," as these are baskets of all-bud black tea, which represent the highest grade of black tea from Hunan. (We also have yet to discuss Heavenly Tip tea in any issue so far.) It should also be noted that as black tea grows in popularity, Liu Bao and Hunanese producers are expanding their range of products, often mimicking various types of puerh tea, which is more well-known. As a result, you can find all types of processing and compression in the market today, but we like to keep our lists focused on the traditional. (As some of you know, Wu De *loves* lists!)

Most of the black tea produced in Hunan was exported to Tibet, Mongolia and other parts of Central Asia. The trade in black tea has gone on for centuries, but it is unclear when Hunan started producing bricks for export. Some argue that it began in the middle of the nineteenth century, while other scholars push the date back many centuries, including Hunan in the production of bricks traded to Szechuan, Tibet and Mongolia centuries ago.

In ancient times, tea was really one of the under-appreciated measures of peace. When even a "Great Wall," so large it can be seen from space, didn't really work to pacify the border, tea often did. The Northerners loved tea so much they were willing to trade their precious horses for it, which the Chinese desperately needed to travel and for the military. And there are occasions where threatening to stop the flow of tea succeeded in deterring or postponing conflict when other measures had failed. In fact, these bricks represented a form of currency throughout much of dynastic China.

In these places, the tea was boiled for many hours with salt, and then mixed with churned butter, cream or milk (often the following day). In Tibet and Mongolia, this tea became part of the daily offerings to the Buddha and other deities and was regarded as sacred. Some material anthropologists suggest that the tea fulfilled vitamin deficiencies due to the primarily meat-based diet in these countries,

7/ Pagoda (Bao Ta, 寶塔) Qian Liang Black Tea

and was therefore a health necessity. But the fact is that these cultures valued tea as a sacred offering, ceremony, hospitality for guests, health and as part of daily life—in other words, all the reasons that tea is consumed around the world, and why it is the second most consumed substance after water.

Aside from the *tian jian* baskets, all the black tea in Hunan is made of *huang pian* (黃片), which are essentially the leaves left on the tree to grow into maturity. This includes both the large towers of *qian liang* tea and the brick tea, like our Tea of the Month. *Huang pian* are often sorted out of other kinds of tea in post-production, whether that be puerh or other kinds like oolong. Tea pickers are usually paid by the weight, and therefore often ignore the instructions of the foreman and pick larger leaves to increase the weight of their bags/baskets with less effort. In oolong production, such larger, thinner leaves turn yellow in processing, which is why they are called "*huang pian*," which literally means "yellow piece." Energetically, these leaves are softer and more Yin. As leaves grow, their cells stretch out and become photosynthesizers. From a more traditional perspective, you could say that the emerging buds are the outward Yang expression of the tree's energy from the root up and out, whereas the older leaves are taking energy in. Since the leaves are stretched out, they are far less juicy, thinner and more brittle when dried. They lack the vibrancy of younger leaves, which is why they are rarely used in tea production. Such leaves are often kept by the farmers and served in the household as a result. But what standard is used to determine which teas are too old varies region to region.

It should be noted that what is considered a "yellow piece" is different in every tea-growing region. Though most Hunanese black tea is made of *huang pian* when compared to other types of tea produced elsewhere, the Hunanese producer considers the larger leaves she plucks to be "just the right size," and also picks out pieces that are too yellow in the sorting stage of production. Consequently, *huang pian* could be defined either as leaves that are left on the tree into maturity, or the mis-processed, overly-yellow leaves, but both are relative to the type of tea being produced.

The large mature leaves of good Qian Liang show bug bites, demonstrating a healthy ecology. Hunanese black tea is amongst the cleanest types of tea. The rural area, clean gardens and the lower value of the tea relative to other kinds means that it is rare to find inorganic Hunanese black tea; it does exist, though. The mature leaves are considered "huang pian" relative to other types of tea, but local farmers have their own standard of what is considered "too mature." The trees could be considered medium-leaf, and often grow in gardens like the freshly-planted one shown above—between cliffs and nestled in small valleys that allow the mist to channel in from the nearby lake, as well as good natural irrigation through the loose and mineral-rich soil. Remember, the leaf is the tree's expression of its relationship to its environment. The greatest influencing factor in the quality of all tea is the environment in which it is grown: the climate, soil, micro-ecology and biodiversity. Hunanese Qian Liang tea has all of these characteristics going for it. We saw a tremendous amount of wildlife in the gardens we visited, including many butterflies.

To honor the makers of our Tea of the Month who work so hard, we should perhaps call the tea leaves they pluck "mature," lest they think we mean that their tea is all mis-processed; as you will taste, it certainly is not.

Anhua

Anhua in Hunan Province is one of China's major black tea production areas. The tea produced in Anhua has earned the name "authentic tea." Why is this? It has much to do with the natural environment the tea grows in.

Anhua County is home to a unique geological feature: a moraine, or accumulation of rocky glacial debris. The soil is composed of this glacial debris, which contains a high concentration of minerals and organic matter, making it particularly well-suited for tea plants to grow. In addition, mountainous terrain makes up more than 80% of the land area in the Anhua region, which is located on the northern reaches of Mount Xuefeng (雪峰, "Snowy Peak"). The territory is criss-crossed by lofty mountain ranges, peak upon peak rising and falling out of the swirling clouds and mist. The Zijiang River flows across the whole of Anhua County, its network of streams weaving across the valleys. The region has a subtropical monsoon climate, warm and humid with four distinct seasons. It's very rich in natural resources, earning it a shining reputation as a place where "there's no need for planting: be it on cliffsides or riverbanks, tea grows by itself." These plentiful resources also mean that there's no need to ruin the soil quality through counter-productive use of artificial pesticides or fertilizers on the tea plants. The tea plants grow naturally in the tea gardens using organic methods and are of excellent quality!

Qian Liang Processing

Once the tea leaf is harvested from the gardens, preparation for the first step in processing black tea *maocha* (毛茶, semi-processed, "rough" leaf) can begin. When this primary raw-leaf processing phase is complete, it's time to begin the second phase—the task of shaping the leaf into Qian Liang tea.

茶 Anhua is extremely gorgeous, with rich, misty crags and cliffs that are covered in vibrant life, quaint old wood and clay houses and ancient wood tea factories. On this page we see the tea being withered upstairs, then dropped down for the de-enzyming (sha qing) before it is piled to oxidize and ferment. Then it undergoes a complicated pinewood drying that lends the tea its particular flavor. There is a raised platform that is heated by a wood fire from below, while skilled workers rake the tea, drying different layers at a time. After the tea is dried, it will go into storage in large bags (shown on p. 14). The raking requires tremendous skill to make sure the leaves dry evenly and are not burned in the process.

Like most of the tea varieties from the Six Great Tea Mountains, the first stage in making black tea is pan-firing the leaf (of the seven genres of tea, only red tea does not undergo this step). After that comes rolling to shape most of the tea leaves into twisted strips and to bring the juices to the surface of the leaf. This facilitates oxidation and fermentation in the following *wo dui* (渥堆, piling or heaping) phase. This processing method is unique to black tea. After the tea has reached a suitable degree of oxidation/fermentation during the *wo dui* stage, the leaf is then dried over a "Seven Star Stove" (*qi xing zao,* 七星灶). It's at this point that the uniqueness of the Anhua black tea processing method really kicks in.

In order to better understand tea processing, we also have to return to a review of oxidation and fermentation. Oxidation is an enzymatic process: basically, cellular breakdown due, of course, to exposure to oxygen (like when a banana or apple turns brown on the counter). Fermentation is similar, but is metabolic and involves the presence of bacteria and other microorganisms, like the changes in yogurt, cheese or alcohol. Sugar is converted into acids, gases and alcohol. This distinction is important in understanding tea, and especially puerh and black teas, because many kinds of tea are withered (oxidized) to change the chemistry of the tea and remove moisture from the brittle leaves before processing. But puerh and black teas are also fermented post-production, which means they have a strong relationship to microorganisms—whether it is naturally fermented (aging) or artificially fermented in the factory, as with shou. Over time, puerh and black teas both oxidize and ferment.

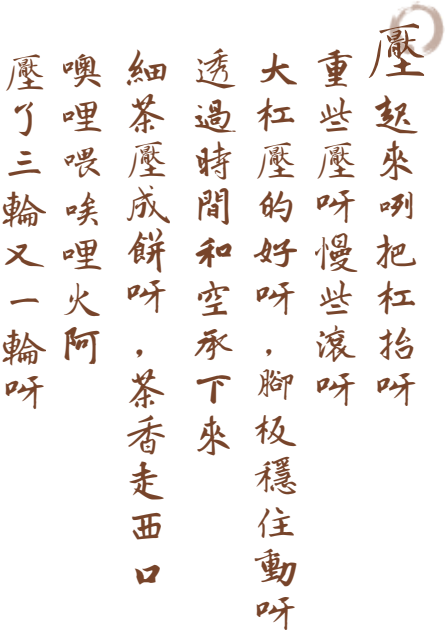
This Seven Star Stove is a type of mud-brick stove fueled with pinewood, which is built in a square-shaped space. The lower part of the stove has a space to conduct heat, and the upper part has a "roof" of wooden framing and bamboo mats. The workers place the oxidized leaf on the bamboo mats and begin the task of turning the leaf over and over to dry it. Seven Star Stoves have seven openings (thus the name), all facing different directions. These multi-directional openings allow the stove to heat up quickly and the flames to concentrate; they also ensure that the tea leaf is heated evenly. Pinewood is used to stoke the fire. There are a couple of reasons for this selection: one is that timber export forms a major part of the local industry along the banks of the Zijiang River, and a large part of the usable wood is pine. The other reason is that pinewood is very fragrant when burned, so using high-quality local pinewood fuel imbues the *maocha* with a unique fragrance. Because the firewood and the bamboo mat are both easily combustible, regulating the temperature is particularly important during this drying process. First, a thin layer of tea leaf is spread over the bamboo mat; when the leaf is about 70% dry, a second layer is spread on top so that the moisture from the second layer can spread evenly through the first layer. Then, according to the dryness of the leaf, a third, fourth, fifth and possibly even more layers of tea leaf are spread on top in sequence, depending on the temperature and the depth of the layers of tea. Finally, the whole pile of tea is turned over and mixed together to make sure it dries evenly.

From the staff's detailed explanations and our own observation of the process, our interview team really came to understand how thorough the whole Seven Star Stove processing system really is. We were struck profoundly by how precious it is that this legacy of knowledge has been passed down from one generation to the next!

The completion of this drying method with the Seven Star Stove marks the end of the primary processing phase. The finished black tea *maocha* is then placed into sacks and left in a storehouse—usually for two years or more—to await the next phase: the process that will transform the raw *maocha* into Qian Liang tea.

The secondary processing phase roughly includes the following steps: removing the tea stems, steaming, moistening, shaping and sun-drying. The first step is picking out the tea stems: to improve the quality of the tea, the workers have to carefully sift it by hand to remove any over-yellowed leaves, tea stems or other debris. After this, the sifted *maocha* is wrapped up in a cloth and suspended in a steamer to soften it in preparation for shaping the Qian Liang tea. The softened *maocha* is then poured into a container that will begin to create the final shape needed for Qian Liang tea. These Qian Liang Tea containers are a type of latticework basket woven from fresh moso bamboo. Because the bamboo is fresh, it can withstand all the compressing, rolling and tightening that is about to happen. These long cylindrical baskets are sealed at one end and open at the other. The tea makers use bamboo to string together bamboo leaves, which enhance the fragrance of the tea. On top of these they put smartweed leaves, which protect against damp and rot. The leaves are then rolled up and put inside the bamboo cylinders to form a lining between the basket and the tea. Then, as one tea maker pours the steamed tea leaves into the open end of the tube, another worker continuously packs the tea leaves down with a wooden stick to ensure they are tightly compressed and sealed off from the outside air. After they've poured in enough tea leaf, the workers seal up both ends of the cylinder. Now begins the shaping phase—a lively process full of strength, good cheer and song. Workers sing a song during the shaping phase:

Press, press, raise the pole!
Press it hard and roll it slow!
Press the big pole well,
steady on your feet.
Twist the small pole evenly,
press the coarse tea into powder.
Press the fine tea into cakes,
send the tea fragrance to the west…
Hey ho, hey ho,
Press it three times then once more.



The Qian Liang tea-shaping process requires a number of strong men to simultaneously trample the tea, accompanied by a hearty, rhythmic folksong. The overall effect is just like watching a traditional dance performance. Firstly, everyone uses a big, long piece of wood (the "big pole" of the song) to make a whole lot of dents in the Qian Liang tea bundles, so that they can then use bamboo canes to bind them into shape. Once the tea baskets are tied up with the bamboo canes, the outermost workers (often the more experienced foremen) use wooden sticks (the "small pole") to twist the outer frame, thus tightening it. Throughout the process, everyone raises their voices together in the traditional Qian Liang tea chant. This song not only lightens the mood and brings an element of fun into the workday, but more importantly, the rhythm and echoing phrases of the song allow the workers to keep a synchronized pace, so that everyone knows when to exert pressure and when to draw back to gradually compress the tea. After this process of pressing with the big pole and twisting with the small pole is repeated a few times, with the loud, clear sound of the Qian Liang tea chant resonating through the air, the bundles of tea are gradually tightened under the hands and feet of the singers until they form tightly-rolled cylinder shapes. Once this is finished, an additional six loops of green bamboo are tied around the outside and bottom of each roll of tea, to make it even more secure. After this, the tea makers check to make sure the tea rolls are straight enough, whether there's an even amount of tea in the bound parts, and so on. For this task, the workers pair up, carefully tapping the rolls of tea with a large wooden mallet, putting the finishing touches on the shaping phase. This step is informally referred to as "hammering."

Once the Qian Liang tea has achieved its final shape, it still needs help from time and the weather. The tea rolls must be stored upright under a purpose-built outdoor canopy. Here, they can be touched by the sunlight (to dry the tea), the night dew (to re-moisten the tea) and the wind—but they must not be allowed to get wet in the rain, so there's usually a tea canopy to protect them. The days go by, and the tea is left like this for anywhere from a month to forty-nine days. Catalyzed by the natural environment, the tea begins to post-ferment, absorbing the essence of the earth and the heavens, the sunlight and the dew. The natural aromas of the smartweed and bamboo leaf wrapping also infuse into the tea, so the longer the tea is left like this, the better the quality. It goes to show that as well as exerting our human efforts, we must also listen to the heavens. No wonder people say that Qian Liang tea "inhales the vital essence of heaven and earth, and absorbs the divine light of the sun and moon."

As our interview team began investigating this tea's origins in Anhua, we witnessed the transformation of the jade-green leaf growing outside in the tea gardens into Qian Liang tea, standing in the workshop awaiting the final processing steps. You could say that that foundation for finishing each roll of Qian Liang tea is time. It took many generations for the ancestors of today's Qian Liang tea makers to develop and pass down such a thorough and meticulous process; likewise, it takes a lot of time for the tea to ferment and dry. Qian Liang tea certainly didn't become famous by chance; it is the product of the abundant natural resources and historical legacy of Anhua County. This tea is the perfect paragon of terroir—the tea as an expression of its climate, soil, micro-ecology, sun, moon and starlight, as well as the processing heritage of the people that create it.

Qian Liang Tea Processing Method

千兩茶製作工藝

1. Once harvested, the raw leaf awaits primary processing.
2. The first step is firing.
3. After firing, the leaf is ready to oxidize.
4. *Wo dui*—piling/heaping to ferment (oxidize) the leaf.
5. The leaf is spread out on a bamboo mat and placed on a wooden base atop a Seven Star Stove, which has seven openings exposing the flame.
6. The tea workers carry out the drying process using the Seven Star Stove.
7. During drying, pinewood must be used for fuel. Pine firewood is easily acquired in the Anhua area.
8. The dried *maocha* is placed in storage to await secondary processing.
9. Stems and debris are sifted out of the leaf.
10. The bamboo baskets are lined. The lining consists of bamboo leaves, then layers of smartweed leaves (*Persicaria chinensis*).
11. Once the lining is properly layered, it is rolled up and put into the cylindrical bamboo baskets.
12. The *maocha* is steamed until soft to facilitate the next steps.
13. The steamed *maocha* is poured into the baskets; during this process the leaf is tamped down with a wooden stick to pack it tightly.
14. Once this is finished, the baskets are sealed.
15. Now, the tea bundles are ready for final shaping.
16. Big, long pieces of wood ("big poles") are used to make indentations on the bundles of Qian Liang tea.
17. The bundles of tea are tied up with bamboo canes ready for trampling.
18. Then they are repeatedly trampled and tightened using both hands and feet until they are shaped into tight, cylindrical rolls.
19. In the last part of the compressing phase, the workers continue to put pressure on the large poles several times to repeatedly compress the tea.
20. The result is fully compressed Qian Liang tea.
21. Finally, the tea workers work in pairs to neaten up the tea rolls.
22. After forty-nine days of drying through exposure to the sun and dew, the Qian Liang tea is finished.

13/ Pagoda (Bao Ta, 寶塔) Qian Liang Black Tea










茶 Traditional processing of Qian Liang tea is one of the most involved procedures in the whole tea world. It can take hours to finish a single log, days if you include the tea, and, of course, years if you include the aging. The songs and rhythm make the whole thing an amazing show that we could watch all day. The aroma is also unbelievable!

Brewing Tips 沖泡技巧完成好茶

You can brew this month's tea in a sidehandle pot or gongfu, but you will miss out on so much if you do not boil it. If you really cannot boil this month's tea, we would recommend gongfu brewing, as this would be our second favorite. Don't feel bad, however, if you can only make sidehandle bowl tea. Pagoda is an enjoyable tea no matter how it is brewed, but the sweetest, smoothest, richest and most transformative bowls will only arrive after a long boiling period.

The simplest way for you to boil this month's tea would be to use a cooking pot, replacing a devoted cauldron with a normal pot on a gas stove. We would suggest using a camping stove, however, rather than a stove top in the kitchen, so that you can take the tea to your tea space or even outdoors, which would be so much nicer. That way, you can also make a nice *chaxi*, which will make the experience much better. You will also need some mineral salt (we recommend pink Himalayan salt), some bowls and a ladle of some kind. Again, if you don't have anything to use as a ladle, you can just use a good-old-fashioned soup ladle/spoon and use that to decant the tea into bowls. If you do end up loving the boil as much as we do, then you could think about investing in some proper teaware for this kind of tea preparation. We now have some beautiful cauldron sets that come with a clay cauldron, iron rings to pick it up when it is hot and a lovely ladle made of clay with a hand-carved bamboo handle. They are currently a part of our Light Meets Life fundraiser and can be found in the "Tea & Teaware" section of our website. In the meantime, have fun this month and give it a try.

When boiling tea, water and fire play a great role in the energy of the tea. Of course, this is true of all tea. The easiest and cheapest way to improve *all* your tea is to source good water and store it properly. We recommend spring water stored in a ceramic urn. If you cannot find an urn, or have one commissioned by a potter, then at least use glass to store your water, as opposed to plastic, which is unstable and breaks down into the water, affecting the quality. Since the tea will be infused in the water for a long time, the quality of the water you use will be paramount for this month's tea. Use the best spring water you have, or at least the best bottled water you can find.

Fire will also play a more pronounced role this month, perhaps more than with any other brewing method. We recommend using charcoal to boil your tea. It will make a huge difference. If you cannot use charcoal, at least use gas, so there is a real flame and not just heat. This isn't a month for electric stoves or kettles unless you really absolutely have no choice!

Bring the water to a boil and add some salt. You may want to use a wooden spoon or chopstick to stir the water into a vortex before adding the tea. This month's tea expands quite a bit, so be careful about the amount you add. Allow the tea to be sucked down into the water and then wait a bit before ladling out the first bowls. You can then boil a kettle or two on a separate stove and continue to add boiling water to the cauldron or pot as the session progresses. We usually add a small pinch of salt every two kettles to smooth out the water and reduce the pinch of the boiled flavors. The deeper you boil the tea, the sweeter and smoother it will get. Usually, the later bowls are the best in the whole session, offering some of the smoothest, richest and deepest teas we have ever tasted.


Gongfu


Sidehandle


Boiled Tea

Water: *spring water or high-quality bottled*
Fire: *coals, infrared or gas*
Heat: *try different temperatures*
Brewing Methods: boiled tea, *gongfu or sidehandle*
Steeping: *flash, flash and longer (The longer the better if boiled)*
Patience: *15 steepings / up to 3 hrs boiled*

茶 If you are going to boil this month's tea, fire will be the most essential element. Try to use charcoal, or at least gas, if you boil the tea. Electric heat makes a greater impact/detriment in this brewing method.

Hunan
Qian Liang Tea
湖南千两茶

Exploring Anhua Hunan

探索安化湖南

茶人: *Luo Ying Yin* (羅英銀)

As we are always saying, a tea is its environment. In order to understand any type of tea, we must understand the environment within which it grows. As Wu De always says, the leaf is the tree's expression of its relationship to its environment. This is, of course, what is meant by the term "terroir." But beyond the Nature—climate, soil and ecology—terroir also includes the human. The culture and heritage of the people who grow the tea, as well as their farming and processing methods, are as much a part of what makes any given tea as unique as the ecology. Throughout this issue, we will journey through Anhua in order to understand the geography, history, culture, folklore and processing methods of this amazing, rich and very old black tea. We do so in order to increase not just our understanding but also our appreciation of Qian Liang tea.

Five hundred years ago, Anhua was the center of the world's black tea production. Tea grew across every hillside and was shipped out all year round, no matter the season. Road after ancient road criss-crossed the country, transporting tea and horses.

Anhua County is the second largest county in Hubei Province. It produces excellent quality teas, including Furong ("Lotus") Mountain Tea (芙蓉), Liu Dong ("Six Caves") Tea (六洞), Gaoma Erxi ("Tall Horse Two Streams") Tea (高馬二溪) and Yuntai ("Cloud Platform") Mountain Tea (雲台). To industry insiders, these are all known as authentic teas from this region. The initial processing of the tea leaf happens in the "front township"; afterwards, the leaf must traverse many kilometers of mountain roads to reach the "back township" area— the eight major tea-processing villages by the banks of the Zijiang River.

August of last year marked our second trip to Anhua. From the Anhua Tea Factory, we crossed Sixian Creek and marveled at the historic charm of Sixian Bridge, an old covered-corridor bridge. Then, we did an about-turn and drove on back to Dongshi, which is located about forty kilometers from the county town of Dongping. Quite early on, the old street of Dongshi was split in two by a modern-style concrete road cutting clean across the middle. The hubbub of voices once heard there has long since faded into silence. Stepping onto the old road with its clattering flagstones, it feels as if you're hearing the echoes of history.

The town of Dongshi is one of the most classic stops along the section of the Old Tea Horse Road that crosses Anhua County. Dongshi is located at the eastern end of the Xuefeng mountain range, with the northwestern part bordering on Xinhua County's Da Tai Shan Forest Park and the Ma Creek flowing across it. From the Tang and Song Dynasties, Dongshi became a relay station along the Old Tea Horse Road. Because of this, the old street next to Shanmen Cave grew into a busy market. This is how the town of Dongshi got its name, which literally means "cave market."

It's said that this area was a bustling trade hub for several hundred years, from the Ming Dynasty to after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Merchants flocked from all around, their shops sprouting up like a forest. As many as 200 bamboo rafts were in operation transporting tea leaves and other goods. During the Republic of China era in the early-mid 1900s, the Dongshi Old Street was two kilometers long. Part of it ascended the hillside, and the whole street was paved in flagstones, forming a gradual upwards slope. Shops lined either side of the road; in those days tea shops alone numbered in the thirties. Traces of the calligraphy from old shop signs are still clearly visible, recalling the splendor of the street in its heyday. Gazing into the old shops that stand silently on either side of the stone steps, you can see the tall shop counters standing proudly; looking in, you can imagine a lively scene of the owners and shop assistants greeting customers as they must have once done.

At the entrance to the old street stands an ancestral shrine of the He family, built in 1793 during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor. It has three entrances around it, and is built in a bold yet simple style. The ancestral hall is said to have had a delicately carved stone lintel which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Nowadays, the old ancestral shrine has been repurposed into a tea processing facility.


恭寬信百慎商鋪

Following the development of the tea and tourism industries over the years, the gradual influx of people has slowly drawn aside the veil of tranquility from the town of Dongshi. These days, there are over a thousand villagers in Dongshi involved in the business of primary black tea processing, bringing with them the dawn of a new era for this prosperous old tea town.

The village of Gaocheng is another fabled spot on the Old Tea Horse Road in the Dongshi area. Its name literally means "high town," likely thanks to its position halfway up the mountainside and its function as a rest stop along the Old Tea Horse Road. Mount Guan at Gaocheng Village is a treasure-trove of tree species, characterized by its treacherous ravines and chilly mountain winds. After crossing Mount Guan, you enter the village, which stands in a small basin surrounded by mountains on three sides with a little stream trickling through. The villagers have built their houses along the stream, and a single narrow concrete road leads to the outside world. Sitting at the foot of Mount Da Tai, the village is surrounded by a majestic landscape. The area is home to southern China's last secondary forest and many rare birds. In recent years, this natural beauty has attracted large numbers of eco-tourists, as well as several major media outlets. This has inspired investors from Hong Kong to devote large sums to developing the tourism industry in Gaocheng.

Based on this information, we too came to Gaocheng in search of a certain visitor experience—the "last horse caravan." But when we arrived in August of last year, we couldn't see any horses carrying passengers—only a few packhorses accompanying the villagers up the mountain to do some farm work. And why was this? We asked them, and found out that the road connecting the village to the outside had not yet been widened, so the big tour buses couldn't get in. This meant that there were only a few sporadic travelers. When tourists arrived, the villagers would greet them with horses they could ride on; the rest of the time, the horses were still a great help to the villagers in carrying out their farm work.

The Old Tea Horse Road

The "Old Tea Horse Road (茶馬古道)" refers to the large network of trade routes on which tea was carried throughout China and beyond to Mongolia and Tibet. Most of these paths are found weaving in and through Yunnan and Szechuan. The name "Tea Horse Road" originated from "tea horse trade markets (茶马互市)," where horses were traded for tea between Tibetan and Chinese people, beginning in earnest some time during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). There were even government agencies in charge of the trade (茶马司), which eventually regulated a similar trade between the northern tribesmen who also had a love for tea.

The Tibetans and Mongolians ate a very limited diet of meat, dairy and barley, which has led some anthropologists to suggest that tea provided them with missing minerals and vitamins, which is why they fell so deeply in love with tea. However, they also loved tea for all the reasons that everyone worldwide loves tea—as hospitality, warmth, as a beverage, as an offering to deities, for ceremonial and spiritual significance, and so on. Chinese, on the other hand, were not as great equestrians as the Tibetans and Mongolians. The tribesmen in the mountains and to the north not only had a flare for riding horses, but also for breeding them, and their breeds were bigger and hardier, which gave them a military advantage the Chinese coveted.

Tibetans and Mongolians love black tea, especially boiled with milk or butter. Therefore, a tremendous amount of Hunanese tea also made its way west and north. Most of the tea Tibetans drank would have come from Yunnan and Szechuan, but trade routes did exist to carry goods from those regions to the northern capitals and beyond as well, making the network as a whole incredibly vast.

Traders who traveled many of these roads often braved extreme climates and rugged terrain to carry their goods. The profits from the bountiful trade along these routes helped improve many of the roads over the centuries, which, of course, benefited all the traders that traveled them. All kinds of way-stations, inns and market towns also sprung up along these trade routes, which therefore helped promote other industries as well.

It should be noted that while the trade roads themselves are very ancient, calling the whole spider web of paths and roads the "Tea Horse Road" is a modern concept. First of all, tea and horses were not the only goods to be transported along these routes; silk, spices, silver and many other tools and goods were also carried down these roads as well. And along with the goods came language, culture and occasionally even love and marriage.

We also have a very different understanding of geography and cartography than our ancestors, whose vision of the world was far more myopic. While traders would invariably name certain paths and roads in order to be able to give directions and draw maps, it is unlikely they would have named the entire network, not thinking of it from a bird's eye view the way that we do. Calling this vast trade network the "Old Tea Horse Road" is mostly out of a nostalgia for the romance of such long journeys, though perhaps a much needed inspiration. We are glad these roads have a romantic name, hopefully encouraging more of us to pack some clothes and gear and go for a long hike!

Since we had come all that way, we still wanted to re-enact the "last horse caravan" to scratch this itch—I had never imagined that the only horse ride of my life would involve being part of a horse caravan! We bought tickets, which cost 150 Chinese *yuan* apiece for about two hours of riding. When we arrived at the starting point, management informed the villagers that we needed horses, and about twenty minutes later they came back leading two horses. The horse owners each supervised one visitor on our ride around the mountain. We trekked along the Chuan Yan Jiang Ravine and into the depths of the primeval forest, where lush layers of foliage and elegant mountain peaks clustered to form a picturesque landscape. Our journey over mountains and through forests was one of boundless delight. After rounding the forest, we descended the slopes to a mountain creek. The rocks of the riverbed formed many fantastical shapes, and the calmer parts the water were so clear you could see right to the bottom. As we were approaching the end of our horseback journey, we rounded a bend and were suddenly greeted with the vivid scene of the fields of Gaocheng Village spreading out before us. The old village looked like something out of a film about another age. I felt as though I were looking back through time. And this beautiful landscape swayed to the rhythm of the horse's hooves, a thousand subtle changes with every step. I could easily imagine myself a tea trader of old—my small horse laden with saddle bags full of tea, passing other carts loaded with tall towers of Qian Liang tea. All the surrounding mountains took on a new nostalgic hue. I wondered how much tea had passed this way—down this very road...

Perhaps one day you too will have the chance to set foot on this piece of land, to travel this stretch of the Old Tea Horse Road with its centuries of history, to wind between the towering mountain ridges deep in thought. If you do, you might just hear the echo of caravan bells reverberating along the ancient road, or resounding above the rustle of the mountain streams.

Covered Bridges & Anhua Tea Culture

Once upon a time in the birthplace of black tea, the Old Tea Horse Road was created to aid in transporting tea. Many tea houses sprang up at the same time. There's also another distinctive cultural relic to be found in this region, which you won't find in Yunnan or Guangxi: the covered bridges that are unique to Anhua County.

When the locals in Anhua reminisce about the past, they recall falling asleep every night to the swift, rhythmic beating of horses' hooves, and awakening each day to the crisp, ringing melody of the bells around the horses' necks. The covered bridges of Anhua can be found in seventeen of the county's towns and villages. Historical records indicate that there were once about a hundred of these bridges in existence; these days only thirty still remain. Last year they were classified as important national historical buildings with protected status. Some of them are still very well preserved, including the Yongxi, Sixian, Madu, Shiyi, Yanzi, Xianniu Shi and Fugu bridges.

The large wooden structure lies atop stone pillars, built in a simple and traditional style with interlocking wooden mortise and tenon joints. The bridge has withstood the elements for centuries, and yet still reclines over Sixian Creek, just as strong and beautiful as ever.

The Sixian Bridge (思賢橋) was built in 1877. The name of the bridge is written in large traditional Chinese characters in regular calligraphic script across the head of the bridge; look further up and you can see the upturned corners of the flying eaves. It has painted pillars and carved beams, with green tiles atop the roof. Setting foot on the steps at the beginning of the bridge, with its ancient wooden pillars and beams forming straight, even lines, a refined, elegant scene greets the eyes. The bridge is lined with wooden benches stretching the whole length of the bridge, to provide a place for the people and horses transporting tea across the river (and anyone else who needed to cross over) to rest a moment and shelter from the elements. The bridge's support pillars were built with stone and mortar, and the whole upper part of the bridge structure is made of wood. Here and there you can still see the traces of hoofprints from a

風雨橋和安化茶文化

hundred years ago when horses used to travel back and forth across the bridge. At dusk, the rays of the setting sun cast their glowing light between the wooden "windows" of the bridge, awakening a feeling of nostalgia in anyone looking on. Gazing on this kind of structure really makes you admire the artistry and aesthetics of the era when it was built. Nowadays, there's simply no way to truly reproduce this type of classic corridor bridge, steeped in the tea culture of times gone by.

Of course, a historical bridge like this one naturally comes with its own stories and legends, too. The adults often tell the village children ghost stories; the bridge is like a heavenly playground for mischievous kids, so the grownups hope to scare them into behaving themselves to make sure they don't damage the bridge. In the world of grownups, the Sixian Bridge also has a folk legend of its own, all about the centipede who subdued the evil dragon beneath the bridge. It's a love story that tells of a centipede spirit who lived in the crack of a stone pillar under Sixian Bridge. This centipede was single-mindedly focused on practicing the Dao. But one day, he fell in love with the seventeen-year-old daughter of the family who kept watch over the bridge, and took on the body of a human to be near her. The girl's name was "Cha Xiang (茶鄉)"—Fragrant Tea. But when the Immortal Mother of Centipedes learned of his trespass into the mortal world, she was furious and summoned him back to be punished.

Suddenly, a mighty thunderstorm arose; amid the downpour, a horse caravan of tea traders came racing against the night, hurrying onto the covered bridge to shelter from the torrential rain. Fragrant Tea hurried to prepare tea for the wet and weary horsemen. Very soon, the waters of Sixian Creek began rising at an alarming rate, the surging floodwaters roaring and raging below the bridge, relentlessly crashing against the pillars and rocking the bridge. Just as everyone was really beginning to panic, the bridge suddenly began to shake even more violently, and the waves below it surged up even higher than before. The water rose and rose, threatening to capsize the entire bridge, pulling it down into the dark depths forever.

Everyone looked down and saw that the cause of this terrible flood was an evil dragon. It had come out of its cave, and finding the wooden bridge blocking its way, it had started slamming its head repeatedly against the stone pillars of the bridge. Everyone could see that the bridge was about to collapse under the dragon's onslaught. With her heart in her mouth, Fragrant Tea quickly picked up a hoe, leapt down onto the bridge supports and began desperately fighting the evil dragon. At that very moment, the little centipede was locked up inside a crack between the stones on the bridgehead. Feeling his blood rising, he let out an almighty cry, broke his iron chains and raced toward the bridge supports.

The old saying puts it best: "The centipede fears the chicken, but the dragon fears the centipede." Suddenly, the evil dragon caught sight of the centipede hurtling toward him, blood-red from head to toe and baring his huge pincers. In an instant, the dragon abandoned his battle with Fragrant Tea and turned to face the centipede head on. But how can a little centipede take on an evil dragon all alone? His magic power depleted, it seemed the centipede would not be able to hold on much longer. At that moment, the Immortal Mother of Centipedes appeared, leading a thousand-strong army of centipedes to join the battle. Seeing this mighty swarm covering the earth, the evil dragon hurriedly dove deep down into the river and fled back to his mountain cave. From that day on, he never again dared to come causing trouble at Sixian Bridge.

But the decisive battle had left the little centipede gravely wounded, and he was nearing the end. Distraught, Fragrant Tea cupped him in her hands. The centipede looked up at her, smiling sadly, and spoke: "My dearest Fragrant Tea, I always hoped to marry you once I had completed my practice of the Dao. But now, alas, it cannot be." With these words, he passed from this world. Fragrant Tea was deeply moved, her cheeks streaming with tears.

She buried him on a hilltop overlooking the bridge and asked a master stonemason to carve the image of a centipede onto one stone pillar of the bridge, so that their story would always be remembered in the village. The legend and the pillar remain to this day.

So, this story explains why in some places centipedes are reviled as one of the Five Poisonous Creatures, yet they are revered and respected by the people of Anhua in Jiangnan. Even today, you can still see the shape of a huge centipede carved into the stone supports of Sixian Bridge. Those who cross the bridge in search of tea, or with their caravans of horses, light three sticks of incense and kneel to present them as an offering to the centipede.

These days, although the leading characters of the story have changed, the themes of the story itself still remain the same. That the covered bridges of Anhua have been so well preserved throughout more than a hundred years of history is all thanks to the generous spirit of the local people who donated funds for construction in the early days. At the head of each bridge they built a tea kiosk, where the bridge-keepers would provide tea for free to passers-by, as well as keeping the bridge clean. These days, some of the covered bridges still have some publicly owned farmland which is cultivated by the bridge-keepers themselves or by the local village guild. There are bridge associations which allocate funds to the bridge-keepers to cover their living expenses and the maintenance of the bridge.

Families pass down their roles as bridge-keepers from generation to generation; one of the bridge-keepers recalls how as a child she would accompany her grandmother for the evening sentry duty on the bridge, offering tea to passers-by and keeping watch over the bridge. They did this to take care of the bridge for their fellow villagers; it was a duty they would never abandon.

In the hometown of Anhua black tea, the tea market has seen a resurgence in recent years, and the industry is booming. We were able not only to observe the flourishing tea industry, but also to immerse ourselves in the feelings of the native land of Anhua tea. Whether it be the ghost stories told to children or the grownups' tale of the centipede who subdued the evil dragon, the village legends all seem to recall scenes of Anhua's covered bridges, with their own special history.

由小保存

蜈蚣怕雞龍怕蜈蚣

Gongfu Teapot
工夫茶壺

Porcelain cups are one of the "Four Treasures" of gongfu tea, and "treasure" is an excellent word to use to talk about tea. The more we orient towards our tea and teaware as treasures, the more likely we are to have deep reverence for them, just as you would with anything you hold dear to your heart. And as Wu De often says, all tea lessons are life lessons. The life lesson here is that we can exercise this same reverence towards anything; be it a hand-made gift, an everyday activity, or even an old tea cup. And the more reverent we are towards the world in which we live, the more treasures we find surrounding us in everyday moments. There are treasures surrounding us all the time, and caring for your teaware properly, as simple as that sounds, points towards that truth.

There are Four Treasures of gongfu tea: a purple-sand clay teapot, porcelain cups, a tea boat, and a good kettle and heat source. They are essential to gongfu tea. Without them, it would be very difficult to make a fine cup of tea. Of course, there are other elements suitable for brewing tea, but when it comes down to what is absolutely essential, these four are most important. Other small pieces of teaware that have been incorporated into traditional gongfu brewing methods over the years, beyond the four treasures, are for example, tea trays for cups, which are a relatively modern adaptation of traditional small tea sinks that we use in our gongfu brewing method to allow for fluent pouring and to keep our tea space clean. A tea tray, however, is not absolutely essential, and fine tea can still be brewed without one. There are plenty of other examples as well, like the essential waste-water container (建水, *jian shui*), coasters, scoops or even spout cleaners.

In the past, we have featured many experiments that involve porcelain tea cups. However, this time we wanted to discuss in greater length why they are used in gongfu tea. I was fortunate enough to have two short conversations about porcelain with Petr Novak and Leigh Fanady—ceramic artists, dear tea friends and long-term Global Tea Hut members—to add some science and expertise to this article, so please raise a cup in their directions!

Why are porcelain cups so universally used in tea preparation, and what makes them good for gongfu tea? Remember, nothing in gongfu tea is ran-

Porcelain Gongfu

茶人: *Shen Su*（聖素）

dom. "Gongfu tea" means to make tea with skill; it means mastery through self-discipline. There is purpose and understanding in each element and movement. There are practical reasons for using each piece of teaware, just as there are in each step and movement in gongfu tea. There are deeper, ceremonial/spiritual reasons behind each piece of teaware, and every movement in gongfu tea as well, which have luckily been preserved and passed on from teacher to student in this tradition through experimentation and living a life of tea. Consequently, there are quite a few reasons that porcelain cups are excellent for appreciating gongfu tea. But what does "excellent" mean? Of course, the spiritual purpose of porcelain, or any aspect of gongfu tea, is very difficult to qualify, so let's stick to the practical. As we have often stated in these pages, any positive term used to describe tea is in reference to the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea, which can be found in past issues. So "excellent" mostly means that porcelain cups influence the tea liquor in those ten qualities. However, there is more to the story than that. Porcelain cups actually do more for our tea than just improve the ten qualities. Before we explore all the reasons why porcelain cups are important, let's briefly discuss what porcelain is.

Porcelain is a type of ceramic. The primary ingredient in porcelain is kaolin, a clay mineral named after a village in China called "Gaoling (高嶺)," where this clay mineral was first discovered and used to make porcelain. Kaolinite is blended with a variety of other materials as well to form a paste or clay used to make porcelain ceramics. There are many different recipes, but most include sand and the mineral feldspar. After blending and crafting into pieces, porcelain is fired in a kiln at temperatures between 1,200 and 1,400 °C. Nowadays, there are almost as many different blends of materials used to make porcelain as there are artists working with it, not to mention different methods of production and craft. There are clays and minerals all over the world that can be used to make porcelain, each unique to their own environment; so, what was used in specific areas in China hundreds of years ago would be very different from what we have access to today. Nowadays, we can use materials, methods and even kilns from different places.

Porcelain can be used to make anything, and its elegance and strength lends itself to making excellent cups for gongfu tea and has been used as such since the very beginning of this brewing method. Porcelain tea pots and cups actually pre-date the gongfu brewing method, and were used in older traditions as well.

Of course, the porcelain cups we use—modern and antique—are glazed. Silica is one of the principal ingredients used to make the glazes that coat porcelain cups, which means that it is akin to glass. This glazed finish is important because it makes the cups very smooth to the touch, and that's relevant when drinking tea. Porcelain cups are very comfortable on the lips, especially in comparison to other materials. There are many types of glaze in the world. Most porcelain cups (at least the ones we use) are fired with a clear glaze, allowing the pure white of the underlying ceramic to show through. These glazes are also thinner than others made with minerals or even liquid clay called "slip," which is sometimes used in place of a glaze, and this thinness allows for a lighter cup which changes the way the cup holds temperature and the way it feels on our lips as we drink.

Cups to Improve Our Tea

There are many ways that simple porcelain cups are better than other types of ceramics or production methods. Beyond improving tea in terms of the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea, porcelain cups also improve tea appreciation in important other ways as well, starting with visual appreciation. After all, enjoying tea isn't just restricted to our senses of taste and smell; there is also a visual aspect to tea. Porcelain cups are beautiful and can reveal the color of the steeped tea liquor in a very elegant and pure way. So much goes into gongfu tea preparation—the heating of the water, the amount of leaf, the length of infusion, the height from which to pour, along with countless other factors—all of which are necessary to observe in order to brew fine tea. When brewed well, the color of tea in a porcelain cup can really shine. The color of tea is also an important indicator in experiments, so using white or light-colored porcelain cups is necessary. It would be difficult

to thoroughly enjoy the color of a tea's liquor without porcelain cups, as other types of ceramics or glazes would alter the color of the liquor.

Many people ask why not use purple-sand clay cups, especially because purple-sand clay has such a positive influence on the structure of water and tea. We have such cups (even very old ones) and, of course, have conducted such experiments. First of all, purple-sand clay cups aren't as comfortable on the lips (they are quite rough, in fact). They also fail to reveal the colors of tea, so you cannot appreciate the liquor with your eyes. Also, purple-sand cups are often too hot to drink from because *zisha* is so good at preserving temperature. (This is, in fact, one of the main reasons that *zisha* teapots make such great tea.)

The second main way that porcelain cups improve gongfu tea has to do with the appreciation of aroma. Actually, more of what we "taste" in tea is fragrance. There are flavors in tea, of course, but there are many more aromas. The aromatic oils that cling to the surface of a cup after we have consumed the liquor allow for deep and relaxing inhalations of delight that every tea lover savors. The type of material used to make a cup, along with the glazing, all affect the way the oils stay behind, the way the air rises and the duration of fragrance in the cup. In our experimentation, nothing is as fragrant as a porcelain cup, not even purple-sand. And along with the appearance of the tea, aroma is also essential. Of course, shape is also influential in how strongly the aroma presents itself, as well as how long it lasts, and that is mainly to do with the most important practical aspect of gongfu tea: heat.

All design elements of any piece of teaware should facilitate the function of the brewing method, which in the case of gongfu tea is to brew the finest cup of tea possible. Of particular importance in gongfu tea is preservation of temperature. This is why cups that are too wide are not ideal because they disperse heat more quickly. In our experiments, we have found that cups with a tulip-shaped body and slight flare at the top are ideal for preserving temperature and conforming to the lips comfortably. A well-designed cup for gongfu tea should also have a foot on the bottom so that it can be held comfortably without burning the hands (two hands in gongfu tea as well).

茶 *Even when looking at a photograph, it is easy to appreciate how much more enjoyable the visual aspect of the tea liquor is in a porcelain cup when compared to other materials and/or glazes. On the following page, we will begin a brief discussion of antique versus modern porcelain cups. The photograph above shows a Ming Dynasty, Qing Dynasty and modern cup left to right. To the right is a close-up of the Qing cup, showing how white and translucent the material from that time is, which we have found to be missing from all modern-day cups. This transparency affects the color and fragrance of the tea liquor.*

The perfectly shaped cup will be smooth on the lips, allow the liquor to splash up to the upper palate and enhance the fragrance.

The size and thickness of the cups are also relevant and are easy conditions to satisfy. What we want to avoid is crossing the line where a cup borders on becoming a bowl. We refer to these as "bups" and do our best to avoid them, so that we don't blend the brewing methods of bowl tea and gongfu tea together, both of which serve very different functions and have important roots in our tradition that are worth protecting. Each brewing method has specific teaware that suits the function of the method itself, and they shouldn't cross over. So, the size of the cup should mark it clearly as a cup! Aside from the size, a good cup should not be too thick or heavy. A thinner, more delicate cup is suitable to a more refined brewing method such as gongfu tea. Some of the first gongfu cups designed for drinking oolong tea are the size of a thimble. This is because gongfu tea evolved to brew oolong tea. (Actually, the term "gongfu tea" first applied to oolong tea in general, and Cliff Tea especially, and only later applied to the brewing methods that evolved to prepare such finely crafted tea leaves.) Small cups actually force you to take smaller sips, which is better when drinking oolong tea. In general, a tulip-shaped, white-colored porcelain cup with a foot and slightly flared lip that isn't too large or heavy will make for an excellent gongfu cup.

Antique Cups

In gongfu tea, we always need to ask ourselves: better for what? Antique cups are not always better for conducting experiments, which sometimes benefit from the uniformity of modern cups. They are also not necessary in the beginning stages of one's gongfu tea practice. Cheaper, modern cups suffice, and will only highlight the influence antique cups have on tea when you finally do acquire a set. However, in general, antique cups are better when it comes to making fine tea. Authenticity is very important here. Just as a fake purple-sand clay teapot won't hold up against any other brewing vessel, neither will a fake antique cup. The real deal makes all the difference in the world, though, and the proof is definitely, and quite literally, in the cup! In most cases, even a beginner can tell the difference between tea from an antique porcelain cup versus a cheap, modern porcelain cup. There are a lot of reasons for this, some known, and some mysterious.

What we do know is that the materials used back in the day were very different from nowadays, as were the production and firing methods. Everything in those days was, of course, wood-fired. These days, most potters who are wood-firing ceramics want a kind of *wabi* imperfection that demonstrates the fact that their work was fired in this way, lending their craft a traditional vibe. In dynastic China, however, that was the only firing method, and it was not a way of setting one's work above or apart from other artists. In those days, there was only proper firing and mis-firing; perfectly fired pieces were more difficult to come by and required much more skill to produce. Actually, potters never fired their own works. Each kiln had a kiln master and several apprentices who worked together to use their knowledge and skill to finish the pieces given to them by potters. Amazingly, they achieved this using only traditional folk knowledge and skill, and very little of the science that modern potters benefit from.

There is a magic to the way that such antique crafts were made without ego—unsigned and unadorned. They were created purely for functional use, and thought to be beautiful only when they worked elegantly. Such crafts were not intended to be beautiful in contrast to what is ugly; they came from a heart beyond this duality, a dynamic beyond any criteria used to define an aesthetic. The makers gathered the materials and ground them by hand, crafting their work from the clay they had taken from the earth with the same hands. Following centuries of tradition, they would then throw their pieces on a wheel turned by their own feet, not electricity created miles away. Their whole body was needed to make even the smallest cup—a tai chi dance of foot-pumping, arm, hand and finger dexterity. And no aspect of this was done to improve their own reputations as artists; they weren't trying to distinguish themselves from the men and women working nearby, but rather to honor the traditions that had provided them with a craft, a livelihood and a purpose beneath the stars.

Perhaps it's simply because they're older and have oxidized differently and developed tea spirit over the years, or maybe they were blended with better materials, made by less distracted people in simpler times, fired at lower temperatures using wood-firing methods—it's difficult to know for sure, but it's easy to experience the difference between antique and modern cups. This is not to say there aren't excellent examples of modern porcelain gongfu cups, but there is also a charm in sharing tea from such old treasures as Qing, Ming and even Yuan dynasty cups that have lived on this earth for so many hundreds of years and passed through the lives of so many tea lovers. You may not have access to or be able to afford such special, antique cups, but please don't let this dissuade you from brewing gongfu tea. It is ideal to have antique porcelain cups, and usually the older the better, but it is fine to start with a cheaper set of modern cups as you cultivate your tea brewing skills through self-discipline. Antique or not, you always have the choice to treat them as treasures, so I hope you enjoy collecting your own treasures of gongfu tea, both as essential elements in preparing fine tea and also as lessons for how to relate to the world around us, filling our lives and homes with a living, breathing art and a way of life we call Cha Dao.

茶 So far, the best cups that we have found for gongfu tea are the alcohol cups made in the Yuan (1279–1368) and early Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). The materials, craftsmanship and firing of these early examples of porcelain are the best. The blue and white designs of these cups were commissioned by the northern tribes who ruled the Yuan dynasty. They worshiped the sky, and the colors reminded them of their prairie homes. The tulip shape of these cups also helps create the perfect balance of temperature preservation and smoother sips, conforming to the lips.

工夫茶

The Story of Anhua & Qian Liang Tea

From travels through Anhua, admiring its history, architecture and geography, we now start to look at the tea factories and tea history throughout the region. Our team was super impressed by the depth of tea culture in such a remote place. We visited all the major factories, interviewing their foremen and managers, as well as local historians. Anhua is steeped in tea, and has been for centuries. You can toss a stone in any direction and find a building or monument to long-standing tea traditions that make Anhua a must-visit for all Chajin.

茶人: ***Zeng Zhi Xian*** (曾至賢)

"Harvest in the springtime, tread on a summer's day, carry it by camel to be sold far away..."

It's October of 2009. Xiao Yangchun is driving like the wind, eagerly heading out from Huang Shaping in Anhua, Hunan Province along the Zijiang River. The reason for his haste? None other than fulfilling a dream he has cherished for more than ten years. It's no foolish daydream, mind you. He's traveling the tea route that stretches miles upon miles in search of his old tea teacher, Master Li Huatang (李華堂), who used to make Qian Liang tea more than half a century ago. In a little old wooden cottage, a predestined tea connection that was set in motion earlier last century finally plays itself out: three Chajin sit together over the steeping tea, their eyes brimming with tears, to taste the 1953 vintage Qian Liang tea that Master Huatang, now over eighty years old, brewed when he was a young man…

The waters of the Zijiang River keep flowing on, bringing with them the spirit of Qian Liang tea, carrying it all through mainland China, onwards to Taiwan, and even further afield to Europe and the Americas. These days, the small villages along the Old Tea Horse Road, erstwhile known for the "slow ringing of camel bells," now play host to wave upon wave of Chajin, tea merchants and customers. In days gone by, Anhua was known for its "tea markets so prosperous that the crowd on both banks was as thick as smoke"; today, it seems that this early prosperity has been revived once more.

As Yunnan Province is the homeland of puerh, and many consider its birthplace the Old Six Great Tea Mountains (renowned as the place where puerh first reached the world) likewise, the homeland of black tea is Hunan Province, and its birthplace the remote old village of Anhua.

Around ten years ago, if you mentioned Qian Liang tea, most people would not be familiar with it. These days, thanks to its surge in popularity, almost everyone has heard of it. However, people still tend to be a bit hazy on the details regarding its place of origin. Many have never imagined that this old village has such a long history or so many precious cultural relics that are still preserved today: covered bridges, old village streets, sections of the Old Tea Horse Road, old docks and tea factories. These manifestations of cultural heritage, so inviting to look at and ponder the past, are even more wonderful than what you'll find in many other tea regions.

Here, let's pause and take a moment to be thankful that black tea didn't have its moment of fame until relatively late. If it weren't for this fact, the old village of Anhua would doubtless have been affected by mainland China's widespread real estate boom, block upon block of old city streets being torn up by diggers, row upon row of towers and high-rises springing up in their place along wide commercial streets. Anhua seems to move at a slightly slower pace, yet in the last few years the black tea industry has been developing quickly, leaving some worried that the pattern other cities have followed will somehow be transmitted to this historic village. I truly hope that the value of ancient culture will retain its influence over the trend of urban development; so far, Anhua has been lucky in this respect!

From Hunan's provincial capital, Changsha, it's a journey of about 210 kilometers to get to Dongping in the town of Chengguan, Anhua County. For the first part of the drive you can take the Chang Chang Expressway as far as the city of Yiyang, which is quite fast. But back in 2009, past Yiyang, you had to drive via regions like Anhua's Xiaoyan to cross Taojiang County; this certainly made for a bumpy ride, with barely a mile of flat land to be seen. However, in the last few years, thanks to the rapid development of the black tea industry,

茶 Everywhere we traveled there was tea—in every household and street. To the left, you can catch a glimpse into the sorting process, which is surrounded by village life: children playing, animals ambling and a student sitting on the stoop studying for a test. The factories themselves were booming, and the opportunity to watch traditional Qian Liang tea production was life-changing, especially to the rhythm of the workers' old songs. They sing not just to pass the time, but also to establish a necessary rhythm that allows them to compress the tea properly. We cannot exaggerate the amount of work that goes into just one tower! Top right of next page: Master Li Huatang (李華堂) receiving some very well-aged Qian Liang tea.

the road has been improved dramatically and is now quite smooth. It winds westward along the south bank of the Zijiang River to Anhua, curving to the northwest. On one side of the road are the riverside cities, on the other a tall rocky cliff. It brings to mind Taiwan's Huadong Highway; the scenery is really quite lovely.

There's a folksong that describes the mountainous terrain of Anhua: "In spring we drink the tea that we pick; in summer we eat bamboo from the forests that grow; in autumn we eat the citrus fruit that hangs from the trees; in winter we eat the dried meat that we string together." It's clear that the inhabitants of this ancient alpine village rely on the mountains for their subsistence—living in harmony with Nature and with each other.

Traveling along the course of the Zijiang River in search of tea, you'll see layers of jade-green mountain peaks rising along both sides of the river, with the houses of the small villages just visible through the riverside fog.

Tea Factories

Today, Anhua's tea companies and factories east of Dongping are mainly concentrated in areas such as Jiangnan, Huangshaping, Youzhou, Xiaoyan and Dongshi. Walking through the old parts of these ancient villages, you feel as if you've entered a time warp, with scenes that seem straight out of the Qing Dynasty or the Republic of China era appearing all around you. Likewise, you'll feel the easy good cheer that comes from being far away from the noise and traffic of the city—not to mention the sky full of stars!

Youzhou, one old town that has gradually slipped into obscurity, is actually well worth a visit, especially since it is home to the old Anhua Tea Factory, the oldest and largest-scale tea factory in Anhua. This is a treasure not to be missed.

The Anhua Tea Factory has a mountain of stories to tell. They have preserve numerous historical buildings. One such is the entrance built for the Xinglong Mao tea company in 1902, which was founded by a Shanxi native. Today it's the main western door of the factory; above it the engraved words "Zhongnan Number One Tea Factory" (中南第一茶廠) are still faintly visible. Another example is the

original wooden tea storehouse which was built in 1950, according to blueprints provided by former factory director Yang Kaizhi (楊開智). It is fully preserved and still in use today. Also constructed in 1950 was the old tea sifting workshop. Built in a sawtooth shape according to design blueprints provided by experts from the Soviet Union, this building has great natural light and was often used to process Soviet Union tea during that period. Then there are also two warehouses for storing materials, built in 1953 according to designs based on the needs of the wooden tea storehouse. Also built in 1953 was the Soviet-style tea evaluation room, which today functions as the office building. In 1956, there were three factory complexes constructed entirely out of wood. Professor Shi Zhaopeng (施兆鵬) of Hunan Agricultural University, an expert in the science of Chinese tea, described the revival of the old Anhua Tea Factory as "recovering the lost crown"—an apt turn of phrase.

After all, this place was once Hunan Province's foremost center for tea experiments. It is the home of "Hua Juan" (花卷, "twisted bread roll") tea and the place where black tea was first mechanically produced. It is also the source of Hunan red tea, Hu Hong (湖紅), every bit as famous as the celebrated Qi Hong tea (from Qimen), and home to Hunan's biggest state-run tea factory: the Zhongnan Number One Tea Factory, which still bears the many imprints of the Soviet experts who worked there—in the architecture and design.

Dating back to 1902, this old tea factory with its endless history and countless stories is now making a fresh start. Many Chajin have high hopes for the factory, not just in terms of the success of its teas, but most of all that it will become the foremost example for all of China in the preservation of historical buildings. If that day comes, imagine what the celebration could be like: the three or four old wooden storehouses in their long rows, all occupied with a nostalgic old-style tea party the likes of which we've never seen before… now wouldn't that be something!

The route back from Youzhou to Huangshaping also follows the banks of the Zijiang River. Walking along the riverbank, you'll come across the old street of Huangshaping,

the port that the black tea used to be shipped out from, as well as ten or so docks left behind by each of the tea companies. The long-established Yong Tai Fu company can also be found on this old street, continuing to pass along the traditional folksong that workers sing as they tread Qian Liang tea.

No discussion of Anhua black tea would be complete without mentioning the Hunan Baisha Xi ("White Sand Creek") Tea Factory, located in Xiaoyan. This old tea factory already has a long history; once upon a time it was plagued by bankruptcy, but these days it's a different story. Its previous incarnation, the Hunan Tea Brick Factory, was founded in 1939 by Peng Xianze (彭先澤), an Anhua native who had studied abroad in Japan. This factory produced China's first ever black tea brick and flower tea brick, and Hunan's first Fuzhuan tea brick; it can be considered one of the birthplaces of compressed tea in Hunan.

Qian Liang Tea

Anhua Qian Liang Tea is many people's initiation into the world of Anhua black tea. Its unique features (including the large volume of each unit of tea), its long processing period, and its distinctive bamboo latticework basket packaging, have earned Qian Liang tea the moniker "king of all the world's teas." The art of Qian Liang Tea processing has been recognized as an article of national Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the passing down of this heritage is inextricably linked with the Baisha Xi Tea Factory.

During the reign of the Qing Emperor Tongzhi, some tea merchants from Shanxi worked together with three brothers from Anhua by the name of Liu to develop a new kind of tea based on the existing Hundred Tael Tea; this was "Thousand Tael Tea." (It's also known as "Hua Juan" tea (花卷)—a *hua juan* is a type of twisted, steamed bread roll.) The Liu brothers guarded their method of making Qian Liang tea. In 1952, the sate-run Baisha Xi Tea Factory recruited the descendants of the original Liu brothers to work at the factory and pass on the art of Qian Liang tea processing. This continued until 1958, when the factory began producing tea bricks instead; production of Qian Liang tea was halted and the manufacturing methods disappeared from this period of history.

Twenty-five years went by, and in 1983, to prevent the art of Qian Liang tea making being lost forever, then-deputy director of the factory Wang Jiongnan (王炯南) rallied a team to recommence production. With great difficulty they managed to reconstruct the treading technique used to compress and bind the tea, only to discover that there was no one left who knew how to weave the latticed bamboo baskets used for the process. They searched high and low, and finally managed to find two octogenarian artisans who still remembered the technique, who joined forces to weave some new baskets. Thus it was that Anhua Qian Liang tea once more saw the light of day. At the time they produced about 300 cylinders of tea; this is why you can find Qian Liang tea produced in the '80s available on today's market.

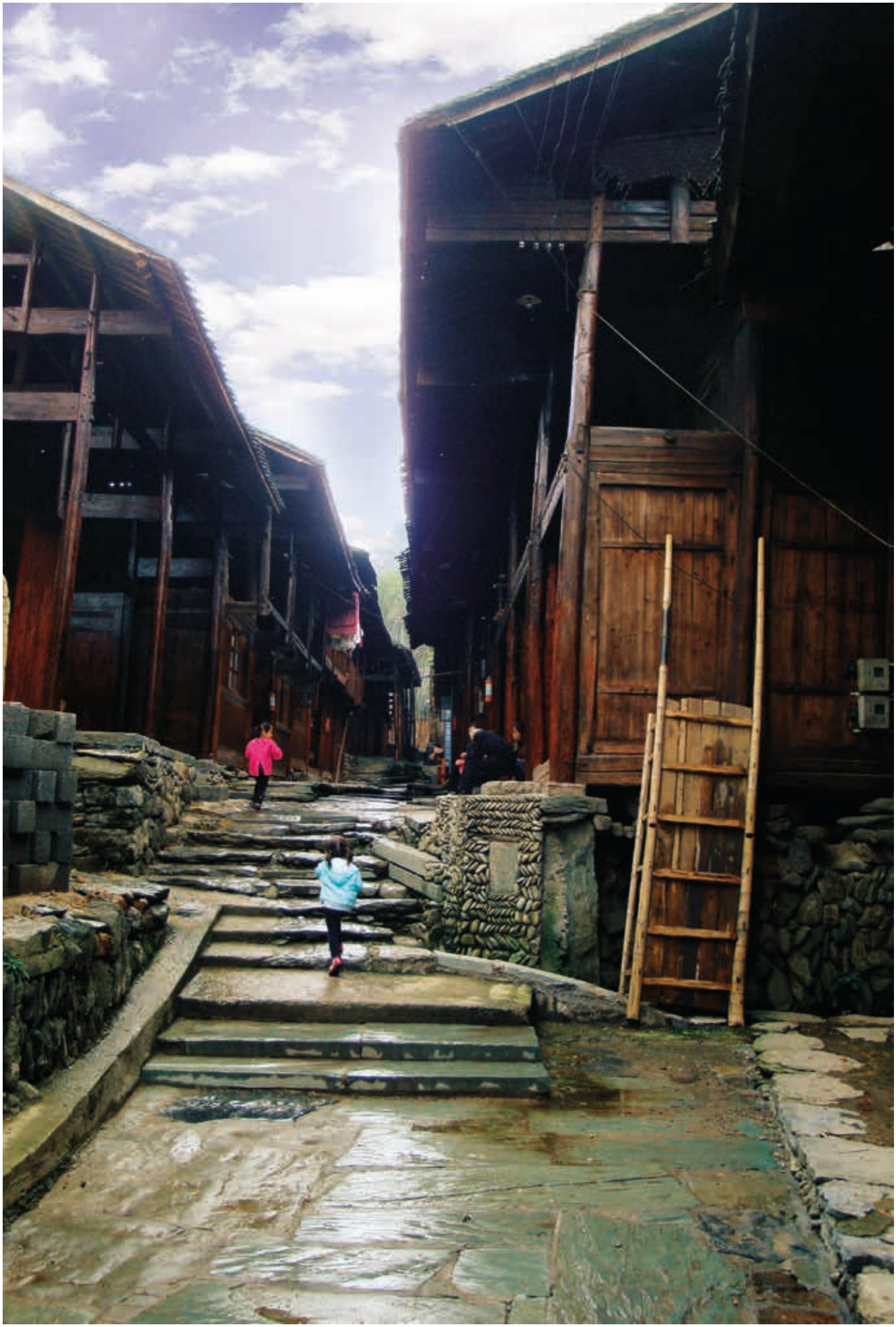
Among the myriad of tea varieties out there, the Qian Liang tea-making method is probably the most intense and vigorous process of them all, with over thirty steps from start to finish. In addition, the final drying step involves exposing the tea to the sunlight and dew, letting it sit for more than forty-nine days. The result is a very patient tea with a distinctive fragrance and flavor.

After hearing the story of Qian Liang tea, now is the perfect moment to hear a translation of the traditional folksong that the tea makers sing as they tread and bind the cylindrical bundles of tea. It's a scene full of strength and beauty, to see six strong men tamping down the tea as they listen to the foreman shouting out this distinctive chant, their voices rising together in unison:

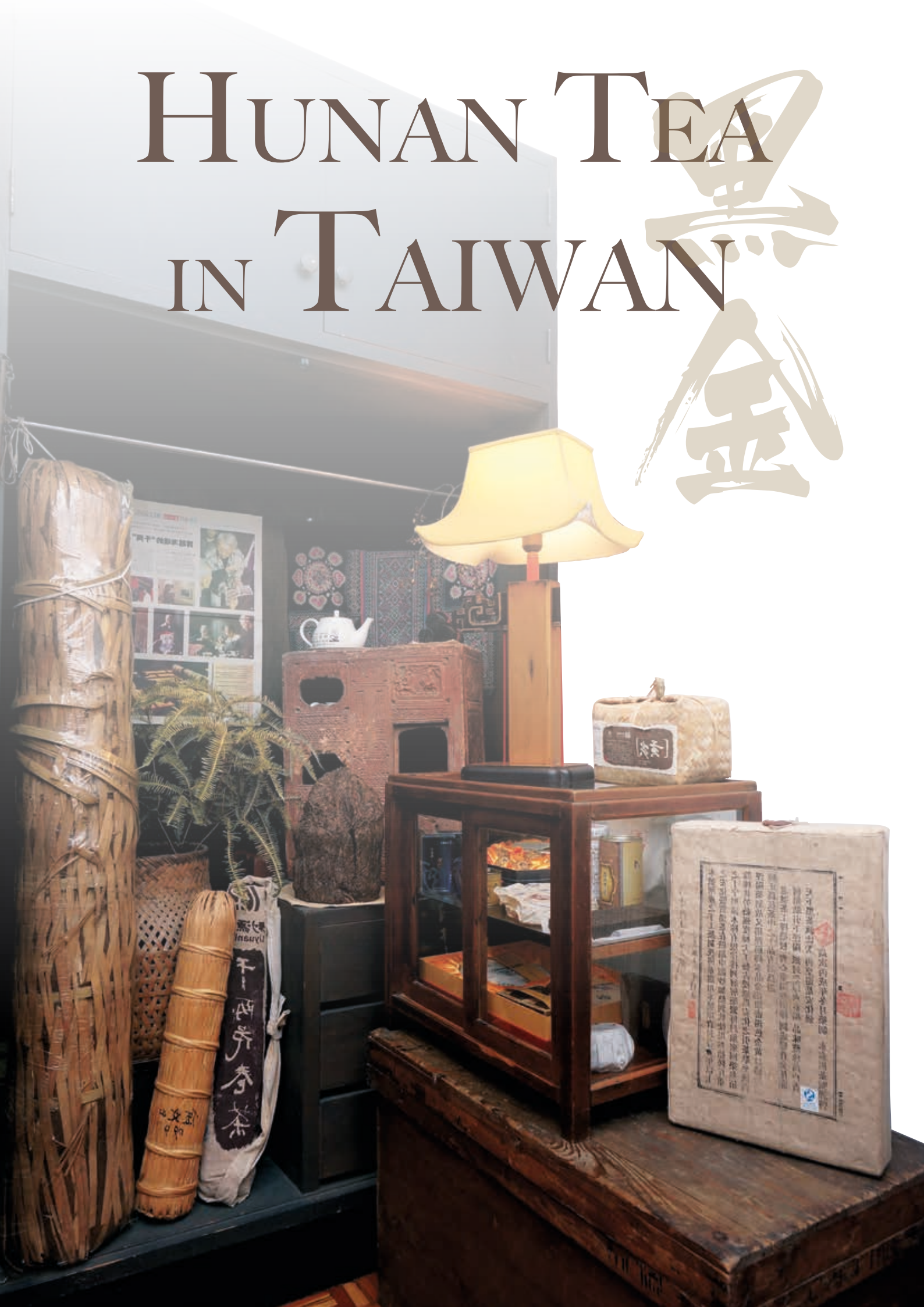
Press, press, raise the pole!
Press it hard and roll it slow!
Press the big pole well,
steady on your feet.
Twist the small pole evenly,
press the coarse tea into powder.
Press the fine tea into cakes,
send the tea fragrance to the west.
Good tea cures a hundred aches,
Drinking it relieves swelling;
To cure loose bowels,
tea is the answer;
It quenches your thirst
and wakes you up too.
It can overcome
any nameless poison;
Drink a few bowls and you'll be fit to
beat the God of Thunder!
Hey ho, hey ho,
Press it three times then once more.
Press, press, raise the pole!
Press it hard and roll it slow!
Press the big pole well,
steady on your feet.
Hey ho, hey ho!
Hey ho, hey ho!
Hey ho, hey ho!
Hey ho, hey ho!

Qian Liang tea is just as it's described in a nursery rhyme from Anhua: "So much tea you could never pick it all, so much flax you could never strip it all." At Gaoma Erxi Village on Mount Yun Tai, "green gold" grows even out of the rockiest soil. Harvest in the springtime, tread on a summer's day, carry it by camel to be sold far away….

茶的街道



Hunan Tea in Taiwan



Master He Jian is one of the most influential tea teachers in the world, and has selflessly researched and promoted tea culture for decades. This is the second time we are blessed to translate his brush in our magazine. He describes a meaningful evolution of understanding and appreciation for black tea in recent years in Taiwan, and the return of some of that tea and wisdom to its home in mainland China, fostering cross-straight peace through tea. We are very inspired to learn more and share more black tea after reading this article.

茶人: *He Jian* (何健)

"This is the tea I made; this is the tea I made..."

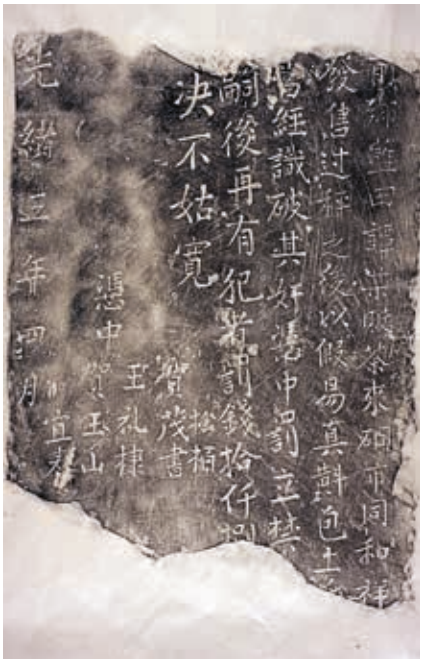
Sipping the fine amber tea liquor in a white porcelain cup, eighty-two-year-old Mr. Li Huatang whispered the words above... We felt clearly that he was not speaking to us, but rather to himself, the way you tell yourself something unbelievable to wake yourself up. After all, the cup of tea flowing into his body was the Thousand Tael tea this old man helped make at the young age of twenty-six, fifty-six years ago. Today, it's so wonderful that it's been brought back from Taiwan, and you can taste the deep and rich flavors.

China is the birthplace of tea. Not only does it have a long history of tea culture, but it also has extremely diverse tea-brewing methods and types of tea. Tea can be classified into seven main categories: green, white, yellow, oolong, red, puerh and black, but among them, the black tea category is usually the most unfamiliar to tea lovers. In the 1980s, a very small amount of Hunan Anhua Thousand Tael tea entered Taiwan via the Hong Kong market. Anhua, Hunan is the most important black tea producing area. Historical records show that as early as the Tang Dynasty (618–907), there was tea being produced along a thin slice of the Qu River, and due to special compression techniques, along with its vast history, Thousand Tael tea is even more precious.

In the mid-1990s, I was researching Yunnan puerh tea. In order to see five *jin* (500/600g) of tea made more than a hundred years ago during the reign of the Emperor Guangxu (1875–1908) in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), I visited the Tea Research Institute in Hangzhou. In the middle of the showroom, the thing that left the deepest impression on me was a complete Thousand Tael tea column. Looking at the top of the tea column, I saw the slightest damage, exposing the brown wrapper, and knew the column was ancient and powerful. I never imagined that not long after, some old Thousand Tael tea columns would appear in Taiwan. This naturally caught our attention, just to hear that there is a tea column, and we went to pay our respects, to look and touch to fulfill our adoration. Gradually, we discovered that on a small part of the top of the tea column were two words penned with a brush and a note indicating the day of the month. I didn't know what it meant at the time, or that if you encounter tea that has been unblocked, you are still able to drink some. From our understanding and experience of tea, this tea has aged for around fifty years, and from historical sources it can be judged to have been produced between 1952 and 1958.

The earliest production of Thousand Tael tea was developed on the basis of Baishui Tea. Production of Hundred Liang tea began as early as the Daoguang period, when Shaanxi and Shanxi businesspeople went to Hunan to order it. There was a significant distance between the place of production and the place of sale in an era when transportation was inconvenient. After pressing the same weight of tea, its volume is reduced, and it becomes more convenient to transport. (It also ages differently.)

Anhua is known as the "hundred *li* of the Zi river" (one *li* is equal to a half a kilometer). Hunan is most famous for the four great rivers: the Xiangjiang, Zi, Yuan and Li rivers. At its location, a hundred *li* of the Zi River flow through Anhua, making the waterway an important means of transportation for tea and other goods.



On ships, cargo must be properly secured in the hold to avoid the risk of shifting the center of gravity in transit. The tea was sold in Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Ningxia, even passing through Kazakhstan to be sold in Siberia, where camels were the main means of transportation. Thousand Tael tea was fixed in ship cabins and suspended over camels' humps to be more stable, and so, on the basis of the production of Hundred Liang tea in the Daoguang period and improved compression techniques in the Tongzhi years, it developed into Thousand Tael tea.

Thousand Tael Hua Tang Mystery

On the first day of the new millennium in 2001, we organized a special exhibition on the beauty of pressed teas at the Pinglin Tea Museum and in honor of the publication of Zeng Zhixian's new book, *The Edge of the Circle: A Deep Exploration of the World of Tea*. Our good friend Lu Lizhen, true to his heroic and generous nature, knew that Zeng Zhixian was collecting information for the book. In addition to allowing photos of his Thousand Tael teas signed with the two characters "Hua Tang (華堂)" and another old tea column with the signature "Yan Dong (雁冬)," he allowed them to be dismantled to drink, producing a photographic record of the process that strengthens the content of the book, achieving a complete collection of black teas for the work. He also provided a specially designed and produced batch of commemorative teapots for the exhibition, with fifty grams of old Thousand Tael black tea inside so that more tea lovers could have a chance to try some—a very fine reward!

As for the characters written on the bamboo sleeves of Thousand Tael tea—names like "Hua Tang (華堂)," "Yan Dong (雁冬)," "Lan Ting (蘭廷)," "Qing Fang (慶芳)," and so on —we initially had two guesses: one was the old names of puerh tea like "Tong Qing (同慶)" and "Jing Chang (敬昌)," and one was the tea master's inscription, but there was no definite answer. A few years later, returning to visit Zeng Zhixian, I informed Lu Yue, director of the news department at the *Hunan Yiyang Daily,* of my enthusiastic tea research. With his assistance, I discovered that in Anhua, the hometown of Thousand Tael tea, there was a master named Mr. Li Huatang, finally solving the mystery we had buried for nearly ten years. In its place came the heartfelt wish to find the tea this old man made and bring it back to Anhua and personally make a pot for him to pay tribute to the old tea master. After all, this is a kind of destiny, that of the many tea masters in so many places, Yeh Tang Tea Culture Research Institute's Zeng opened and yet preserved the complete tea column, all made by Hua Tang. The stars moved over seasons, and this old man was still in Anhua waiting for us to serve him tea! The Fates were making tea that day...


YIYANG DAILY 文化·益阳 B2

跨越海峡的“千两”茶缘

茶 *The meeting between Master He and Li Huatang has become a legend in Taiwan and Hunan, covered by newspapers on both sides of the strait, like the article shown to the left. On the opposite page are news reporters in Hunan interviewing Master He and the lectures he gave at Emerald Hill while lucky participants got to drink aged Thousand Tael tea. There are also two pictures from the black tea exposition on the far page and above, showing the many types of black tea on show for passersby to try. We attended one such exposition in Taichung and were impressed by the variety and quality of black tea on offer. The rubbing on the far page is from a stone in Anhua that discusses the laws for selling tea at the local market. It outlaws inauthentic tea from outside Anhua (and also blends) and lists the fines associated with such nefarious behavior. Purity is very important to Anhua producers still today. On the following pages we see the Old Tea King that Master He took with him to Hunan to share with Master Li. On the last page, we see the signatures of various tea masters who made the columns, which was the initial clue that led Master He to find Master Li, creating tea history.*

On October 20, 2009, through the opportunity to participate in Yiyang City's first black tea culture festival, afterwards, with the assistance of many individuals like Anhua County Deputy Governor Xiao Lizheng, Baishaxi Tea Factory General Manager Liu Xin'an, Cao Rong from the Yiyang Municipal Government News Office, *Yiyang Daily* news department director Lu Yue, China Central Television platform director Li, we were in the community of Changle in the town of Xiaoyan, Anhua County. There we met the elderly 82-year-old Mr. Li Huatang, and through a companion with a thick Hunan accent, informed him of the reason for our visit. For about two or three minutes, his lips trembled, but no words escaped. The inside and outside of the small cabin were crowded with people, yet you couldn't hear even a sigh. The air was dense. Afterwards, he told me he had never been so moved by tea. It was one of the greatest tea sessions of my entire life. I won't ever forget it.

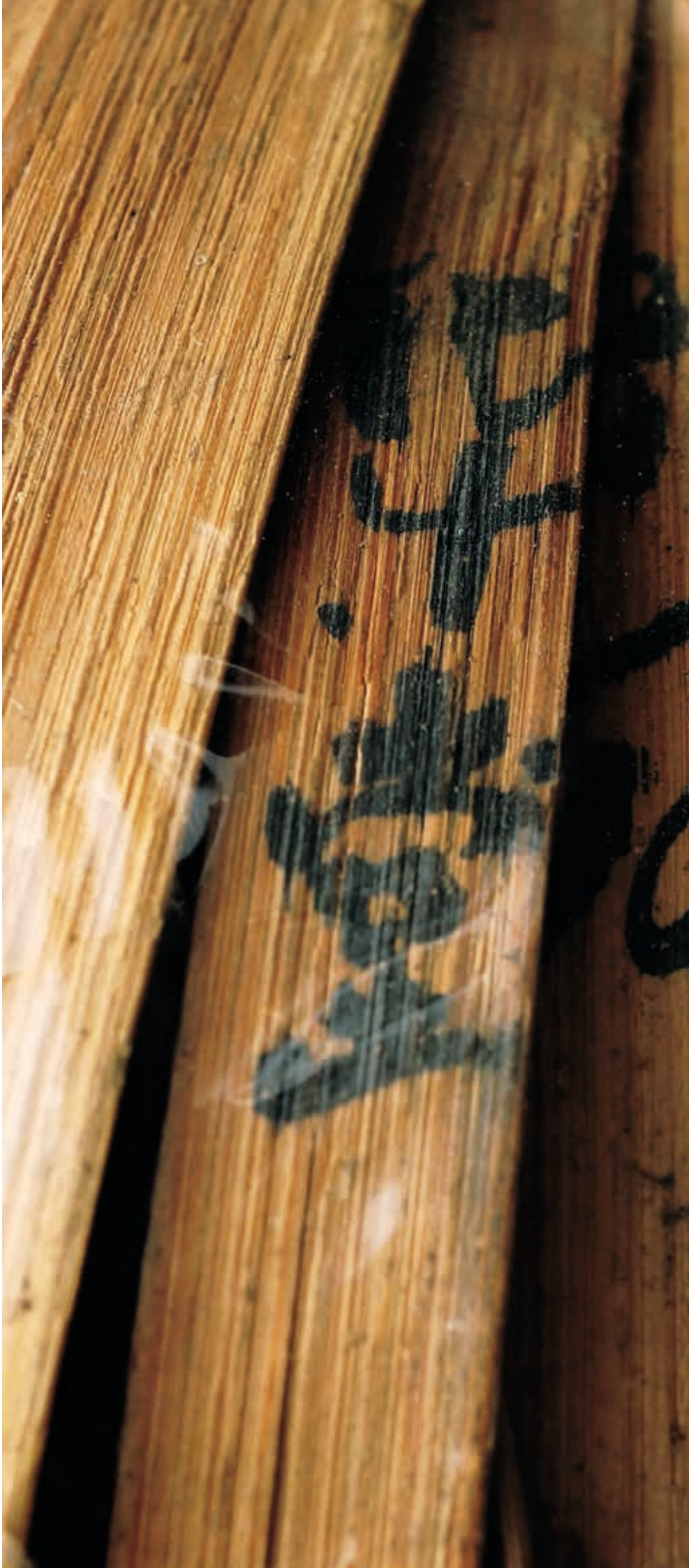
After a violent dry cough, old Hua Tong slowly recalled the past and talked to us about the situation of making tea in the past. The old man is so interesting, coming from the Liberation Era. In three sentences, there must have been as many references to "Chairman Mao." I have also collected information related to black tea for more than ten years. This included him and his working partners at the time, the signatures left behind on the columns of Thousand Tael tea. After reading the information, the old man said that this tea was made in 1953, because after liberation, the Baishaxi Tea Factory renewed recruitment of tea workers in 1952 and restored production of Thousand Tael tea. There was a quality competition the following year. In order to judge the results, the name and date were to be written on the bamboo. After the tea worker pressed a good tea column, it was submitted for review, and signed and dated, so the writing was not the same as the person who signed the bamboo.

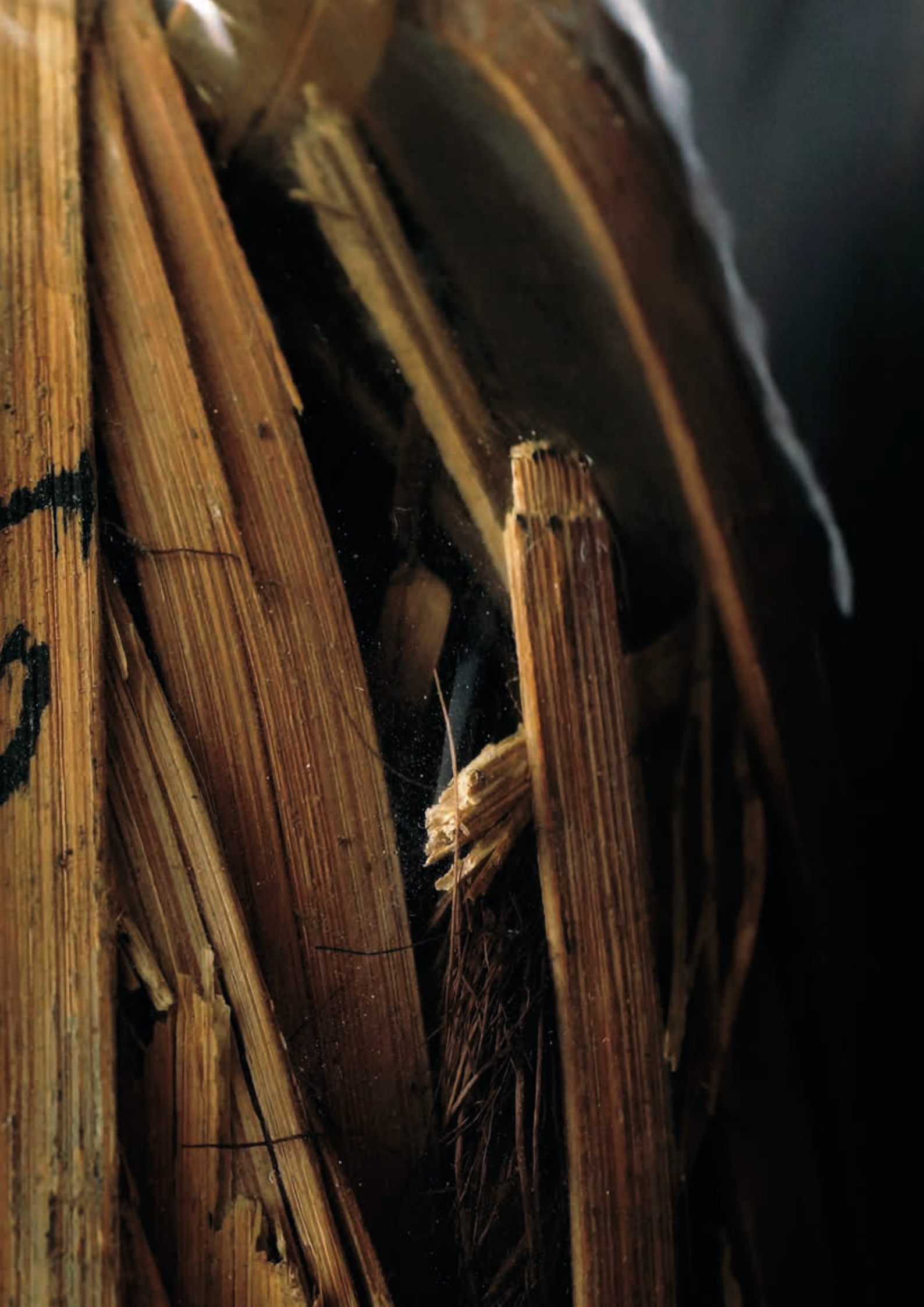
Then, I used a white porcelain tea set that is easy to use while traveling to brew him the Thousand Tael tea he personally pressed fifty-six years ago. "This is the tea I made, this is the tea I made..." These words will haunt me until the day I die. The look on his face was priceless. It is very rare to have an old tea marked by the person working within the factory and to know who exactly touched a sixty-year-old tea. Such a scenario is unheard of in the world of tea. He himself had made this tea in his youth, and it had traveled across the sea to Taiwan where it had aged these many decades. Fast forward fifty-six years: today, it's a wonderful thing to bring back from Taiwan, and you can taste the profound changes age has brought to the tea, mirrored in the face of the old master. At this point, our pledge to pay tribute to old tea workers has been fulfilled. Every time I read this, my heart bursts with emotion, and I will never forget this strait-spanning "Thousand Tael Tea Gathering."

The First Black Tea Exposition

In the midst of this 2009 Hunan black tea journey, I received gifts from many Chajin. This included Hundred Liang and Thousand Tael tea from Baishuixi Tea Factory, Gaoma Erxi's replica Ming Dynasty disc tea, Lianxi Tea Industry "Six Hole Black Pearl" tea, Fuhua Tea Factory Thousand Tael rolled flower tea, Li Yuanlong's Thousand Tael tea, old Yong Taifu brick tea, and a wide variety of others. After returning to Taiwan, I thought about how to best use this multifaceted beauty. One day, tea friend Bao Ling came to visit the tea hall. She has held a New Year's Eve tea party at Emerald Hill for several years. To welcome the coming year 2010, we decided to make Hunan Black Tea Tasting the theme of the party. So Taiwan's first Hunan Black Tea Award Festival was born. During the party, we would display all the black teas brought back from Anhua, grouping them by method for each group of tea friends to take a sample to enjoy according to their preferences. While the tea party was going on, slides introduced the party and tea friends and explained the history of Hunan black tea, culture, and the current situation. Finally, the tea lovers at the meeting shared the Thousand Tael tea made by Mr. Hua Tang in 1953 as a successful conclusion, greatly improving the tea lovers' understanding and taste of black tea.

"Hundred Tael" and "Thousand Tael" both refer to their weight. Thousand Tael tea columns are about 37.27 kilograms, or 62.5 Taiwanese *jin.* After the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), production briefly resumed from 1952-58, but after 1958, due to the gradual closing of the Chinese market, stagnant sales led to no demand for production. With Reform and Opening in the 1980s, it was only in 1983 that a batch of 300 Thousand Tael teas was sent to Singapore, Japan, and other places for exhibition; but because the market did not know enough about black tea, a path to sales could not be opened. It was not until the late 1990s, as drinking puerh tea began to rise in popularity, that widespread acceptance of pressed tea increased in China and the world.





The economic development of Mainland China and the tea-drinking population have increased greatly, and production resumed in 1997. Since 2006, large-scale production has started again.

Taiwanese Thousand Tael Nostalgia

Thousand Tael tea has very clear production generations. When we came into contact with this type of tea in the 1990s, obviously post-'90s tea had not yet been produced. If it was not left from the Qing Dynasty, it was produced either in the 1950s or 1980s. At present, I can visit the oldest tea column, one from the 1950s. When visiting Hunan in 2009, through my good friend Huang Henghao, I met Changsha Chengyuan Hall's Mr. Yin Rui. I had the feeling of being in black tea's hometown in Hunan. I also felt confused by the strange and chaotic history of this type of tea. I would need to travel there to understand more.

In 2010, we carried out our plan to return the Old Tea King to his hometown. Mr. Yin Rui has long been committed to the promotion of Hunan black tea, sparing no effort in spreading information and appreciation of black tea. He commissioned me to look for 1950s-era tea on his behalf. At present, Taiwan's old Anhua Thousand Tael tea still exists in good condition, with the efforts of many parties and support of Taiwanese collectors. In total, I was able to successively return three columns of 1953-produced Hua Tang, Lan Ting, and Qing Fang Thousand Tael tea to my hometown. After corresponding with Mr. Yin Rui, I deeply appreciated his efforts and contributions to local tea culture. For this reason, I commissioned Taiwanese tea industry senior and great poet Mr. Pan Yanjiu to write and present a hand-brushed tea poem "Thousand Tael Tea Column Dao." The text of the poem is as follows:

千兩茶柱道情

一碗金珀漿入口潤吻甘舌本
The first bowl of golden amber syrup enters running, a sweet kiss on the tongue

二碗溫香透鼻甜喉沁腦門
The second bowl, warmly fragrant, sweetens the throat at the mind's gate

三碗胃根暖
The third bowl warms the core

四碗五盞連六盞五臟六腑清
Four, five or even six bowls and the internal organs are cleansed

七碗喫了時空流轉瞬眼間
Seven bowls have devoured all of time and space, circulating visions between the eyes

但見美人昭君出塞去
See the beautiful Zhao Jun heading out

大漠遠傳駝鈴聲
In a far-off desert pass a camel bell rings

又見公主文成入番時
See also the princess entering

雪山掠過氂犛牛影
A snowy mountain pass overshadowed by the strolling yaks

八千里路雲和月
An eight thousand li road of clouds and moon

蓬萊仙島共蟬娟
To Penglai Island, beckoning with cicada song

九絕茶仙椽筆寫道情
Nine absolute teas, an immortal pen writes of the Dao

十根茶王千兩柱百萬黃金價
Ten tea kings and Thousand Tael columns sold for a million gold

此是漢唐皇家督造嫁粧物
This is a Han and Tang royal marriage

百姓那得幾回嚐
People will taste but few times in this realm

遊戲人間祇此一趟
The only game in the world

何況是此五十齡的春色種
Even more wonderful is this fifty-year-old awakening of spring—

當下 當下 當下
Now, now, now...

I also gave the same tea poem to Mr. Wu Xiang'an of Anhua, who has also been committed to the research and promotion of Anhua black tea culture for a long time and set up a private Anhua Black Tea Museum. Witness his extremely admirable spirit: in order to enrich the museum collections, he framed the tea poetry and displayed it with an old 1953 Thousand Tael tea piece, which is used as a permanent collection in the museum. "Made in Taiwan" Thousand Tael tea poetry, together with the Old Tea King, have gone back to their hometown, and a wonderful page has been written for cross-strait tea culture exchange.

Cross-Strait Thousand Tael Development

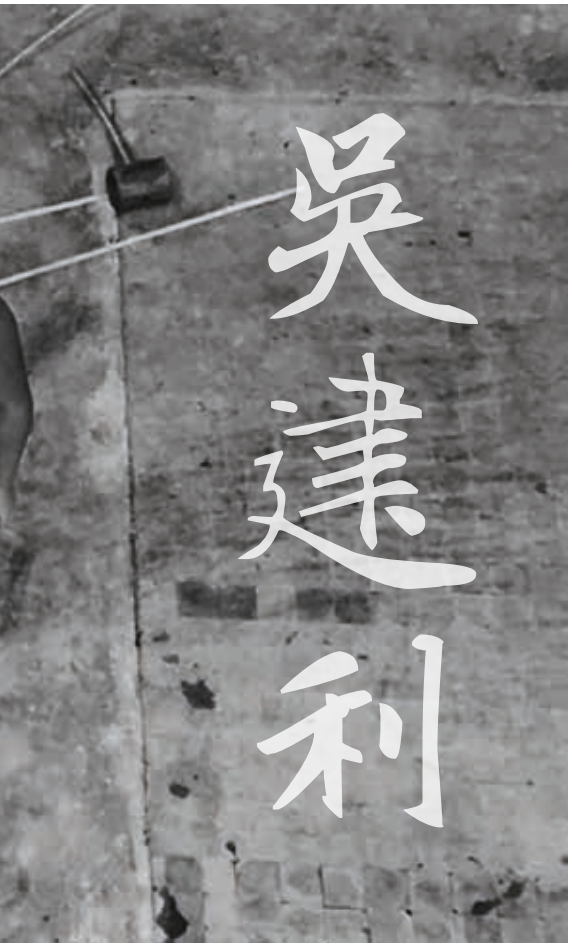
Visiting Anhua again in September of 2012, although only three years later, I clearly felt the development of the tea industry. I remember when the leaders of Anhua County visited the Yeh Tang Institute two years ago, I was asked how to develop the Anhua black tea industry. My answer was that as far as the overall industry is concerned, Anhua black tea does not have the problem of poor sales, but there is not enough to meet demand. Anhua black tea sells well, but over the long-term, the fundamental way is to maintain the overall ecology, produce high-quality, organic raw tea leaves and step by step put in place the correct tea-making process.

Sure enough, when revisiting in 2012, on the opposite shore of the Zi River in Dongping arose contiguous large buildings, and standing on the street, a recently-opened row of tea shops. Producing local Anhua tea is no longer enough, and many tea factories rely on sourcing tea externally for production and processing. In particular, in the process of making black tea, drying the tea on the seven-star stove is an important step that lends its special flavor to the black tea and produces specific benefits. But in order to simplify the process, this has been abandoned by some tea factories, which has greatly affected the quality of black tea. Past concerns have resurfaced—under prosperous development, there is an inevitable price to pay.

Of course, this is not a phenomenon wholly without upsides. This trip left a deep impression on me when I visited the new Dong City Liyuanlong factory and saw the "Thousand Tael Flower Rolled Tea Mat Surface Stepping" developed by owner Wu Jianli (吳建利, *shown below*). He replaced the traditional muddy ground with a wooden mat, trying hard to improve the process of Thousand Tael tea, and increasing the rolling traction to improve the compression process. I hope that Anhua, the hometown of black tea, can walk down a prosperous road in the long tradition of tea culture, combining modern research and conditions for the benefit of all black tea.

In early 2009, I visited Anhua and returned to Taiwan. We hosted Taiwan's first black tea party at the Emerald Hill in Taipei. Twelve years after re-visiting Anhua, at the invitation of Zhongshan Hall at Taipei College, I also arranged to hold Taiwan's first

black tea lecture on December 16th of that year. I shared two Yuyang black tea culture festival activities, and introduced the audience to the geography and culture of Anhua, Hunan, in detail and the developing history and current status of black tea culture. In order to let the participants do something besides listening to gain a deeper understanding of Anhua black tea, we brewed Dong City Old Street Liyuan Long '07-produced Thousand Tael tea, provided by the owner of Changsha Chenguan Hall, Yin Rui for everyone to enjoy. It received unanimous praise. I sincerely hope that through the joint efforts of tea lovers and the promotion of cross-strait tea cultural exchanges, we will move towards positive development in black tea culture.



This is the unique rolling invented by Wu Jianli (left) and the individual names on the old towers of Thousand Tael tea (right).

Pagoda

2007 Qian Liang Black Tea Cake

Our Light Meets Life fundraiser is a way of sharing some great teas with you all and gathering the resources we need to build our future, better Center. We thought it worthwhile to review the compartments of our organization briefly, for those who are new here, and discuss the way the fundraiser works.

Simply, we have three main branches: Tea Sage Hut, Global Tea Hut and Light Meets Life. Tea Sage Hut is our current Center, located in Miao Li, Taiwan. We host two ten-day courses here every month, and Chajin come from all over the world to participate in these immersive "Intro to Cha Dao" programs aimed at providing the tools to begin or deepen a tea practice. During the courses, participants learn tea brewing, meditation, aspects of ceremonial significance, water, fire and even visit a tea farm to make their own tea. Once you have taken a ten-day course, you may also return to help serve others (which many do). All the courses are free, as the Center runs on donations—though no one ever pressures you to give or records who gives or how much.

Global Tea Hut is, of course, this magazine, sent around the world to more than sixty countries. This magazine is not meant to be a mouthpiece for our lineage. It is, instead, an educational resource for all tea lovers. We aim to offer as wide a variety of authorship and scholarship as we can without compromising our environmental values. We have access to four of the largest and oldest Chinese databases of articles, which have been kindly donated to us, and will continue to translate great material as we have done in this issue.

Our current Center is wonderful, but it is small. It is also an old house we have remodeled into a tea Center. Light Meets Life is our future Center that we will architect from the ground up to be the world's biggest, best and most inspiring tea Center. We will then offer a wider variety of courses and have much more room for bigger courses as well. This cake is part of our annual fundraiser to gather energy towards that goal. All the proceeds from Light Meets Life tea and teaware are used towards the aim of building a bigger and more permanent Center here in the mountains of Taiwan.

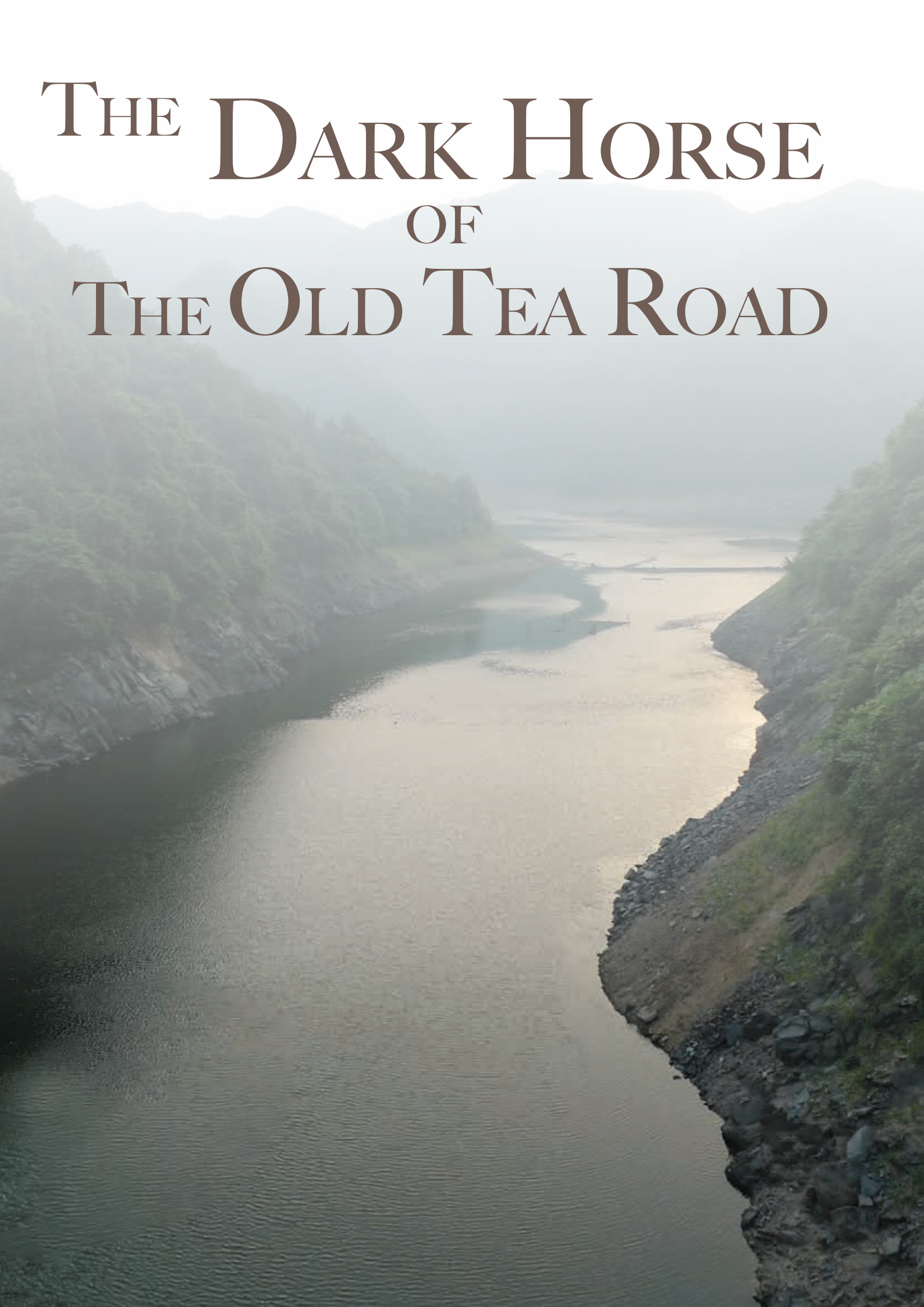
This amazing handmade Qian Liang tea from the Bai Sha Xi Tea Factory in Anhua, Hunan can also be had in the form of one large cake that helps support Light Meets Life. These beautiful cakes are best boiled, but can also be served gongfu style. This is a chance to get more of the Tea of the Month if you liked it. You can, of course, age the cakes for some years, or, drink some now and age the rest.

Each cake was cut by hand, so the weights differ tremendously. They range between 750-850 grams. This also has to do with striations in the sides of the tower and the density of compression, which is different throughout each tall tower. If you look at the pictures throughout the magazine, you can see that there is a kind of warp and woof to the towers, caused by the large planks the workers use to roll and press each one by hand. This means that the tea is thinner and slightly less dense in some areas than others. Also, since the cakes are sawed by hand, the thickness is not exact (though very close). Despite the variance in weight, this is still a great deal considering how much tea you get (around double the average full-size puerh cake!)

Each cake comes wrapped in organic paper printed with Wu De's artwork (shown to the left) and is $150 + shipping:

www.globalteahut.org/pagoda

The Dark Horse of The Old Tea Road



Once again, Ms. Luo regales with her extensive tea knowledge, some experience and a bit of wit to make this a wonderful read. As was stated in Master He's article earlier, black tea is often the category of tea that Chajin know the least about, despite its rich and deep history, heritage and lore—not to mention one of the most unique and complicated processing methods of any tea. In this article, Luo Ying Yin answers some of the most common questions that tea lovers have concerning black tea in general, and Hunan Thousand Tael tea specifically, leaving us all much more aware when it comes to this marvelous tea.

茶人: *Luo Ying Yin* (羅英銀)

Time and sentiment can lend a certain charm to tea, to a culture and a place. Anhua is the home of black tea, and the mysterious "Thousand Tael Tea" is deeply imprinted on Taiwanese tea lovers' hearts as well, marrying the two regions in one affair of the heart. In the 1990s, Taiwanese started to taste the thousands of years of history steaming from a Hunanese cup, to appreciate its marvelous and unique processing and know its signature aromas and flavors.

In this way, starting in the mid-1990s, Taiwanese tea lovers have sought to discover more about black tea and learn the truth of its heritage, history and processing. These intrepid tea lovers have taken planes from Taiwan to Hong Kong, transferring to Hunan, then passing from Changsha through Yiyang and Taojiang to arrive in Anhua, Chengguang Town, Dongping—a long and rough road for the sake of tea! In 2009, He Jian and Zeng Zhixian (two Taiwanese tea scholars) repatriated a sixty-year-old Thousand Tael tea to the at-that-time already 82-year-old elderly Mr. Li Huatang who himself produced the column some fifty-six years earlier.

Thousands of miles were crossed because of these tea lovers' deep appreciation for the Leaf, their journey becoming a local legend in both Taiwan and Hunan.. Also, we are deeply affected by these cross-strait ties, especially as it is a peace conveyed through the taste of tea. The articles by He Jian and Zeng Zhixian we have translated in this magazine offer us a chance to sit for a pot of Thousand Tael tea from the '50s, with all the time, sentiment and deep flavors billowing out of the steam from this mysterious rolled tea. After reading these amazing articles, I was left with a touching appreciation for the depth of Qian Liang history and the beauty of its craftsmanship. I hope our readers will also take the time to read those two articles.

I thought it would be worthwhile to address some of the common questions tea lovers have about black tea in general and Anhua tea specifically. Why is Anhua black tea not called "Anhua tea" according to the usual custom of naming a tea by where it comes from? When was Thousand Tael tea created? Anhua black tea was originally basket tea; why was it changed to compressed tea? Why is the initial harvesting done in the spring, but it is only in the autumn that it is pressed into Thousand Tael tea? What does the unique seven-star stove drying process add to Thousand Tael tea? What is the difference between black tea and puerh tea processing? What changes have occurred in the industry in Anhua in recent years? And what is the future of black tea in Anhua?

When exactly was Thousand Tael tea created?

Six hundred million years ago, the Heavens paved the way for an excellent environment for growing tea in Hunan, with glacial deposits of rich minerals that have helped make extremely fertile soil. This shows how deep and vast any given terroir is, since you can trace the unique characteristics of a tea-growing region back as far as you like. The mountains in Anhua are densely forested; the clouds are haunting; the crystal waters are born high up in the mountains from pure springs—so clear the mountains reflect in them literally and metaphorically in the minerals the water contains; and the valleys stretch up and away, adding mystery to this otherworldly place. Therefore, the tea of Hunan is said to "thrive from riverfront to cliff, with no effort, even in the planting." It is, in other words, a very suitable tea-growing environment. And, of course, like all tea, it is the terroir that has created the uniqueness of Anhua black tea.

The tea produced within Anhua is called "authentic tea" by locals, much like many aboriginal tribes call themselves simply "the people." According to the description in Peng Xianze's book *Anhua Black Tea*, Furong Mountain produces the best tea. As far as output is concerned, the "rear" towns (higher up) produce more than the "front" towns, with good water north and south. Wanshan Luoli residents grow tea for a living. "Authentic tea" is Liudong tea grown in the north and south sections of Anhui, Gaoma Erxi, Yuntaishan and Furong Mountain. The black tea produced outside of Anhua, known as "outer road" or "wild" tea, such as Yiyang tea, Xinhua tea, Yuanling tea, Taoyuan tea, Changde tea, and so on, is considered by locals to be inferior.

The reason Anhua black tea is not called "Anhua tea" is because in China, the term "black tea (*hei cha*, 黑茶)" comes from Anhua. *Ming History: Tea Law* reads: "In 1524, the imperial ambassador declared commercial tea production to be too low. Seeking a new tea, the official found a tea that is more easily carried by horse to market; its name is 'black tea.'" This is the first time the term "black tea" was recorded. Peng Xianze's *Anhua Black Tea* says: "The name 'black tea' is historically only found in Hunan's Anhua." Anhua was the first place to grow black tea, and in the beginning, the only place. Consequently, there was no need to call the tea "Anhua tea" since *all* "black tea" came from Anhua.

In the Tang Dynasty (618-917), there was a record of the "thin film of the Qu River (now in Anhua County)" producing "iron-colored tea with a unique aroma." In the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Meishan County opened its tea trade. According to research, what is known as the Old Tea King, "Thousand Tael tea (千兩茶)," was created according to the suggestions and needs of Jin merchants. In 1825, a tea person from Anhua named Bian Jiangliu, under the guidance of Jin merchants and Sanhe public guidance, used a lattice (the now-traditional treading process, which is based on the processing of "Hundred Tael" tea),

increasing the weight in 1829 and creating the first ever "Thousand Tael" tea. The larger columns and the compression increased the amount merchants could carry and therefore replaced baskets altogether. The creation of Thousand Tael tea has enriched Chinese tea culture and is the glorious crown jewel of all black tea.

Why is Thousand Tael tea made in spring but pressed in autumn?

People who know a bit about this special black tea always ask why the harvest and initial processing happen in spring, like most teas throughout China, but one must wait until after the height of July heat has passed to compress the tea? (As you can see, the answer is in the question as I have phrased it.) The important factor in this is that Thousand Tael tea must dry naturally. In July, the hours of sunlight grow longer, the humidity decreases, and the local bamboo is mostly free of insects. The bamboo is used to wrap and compress the tea, so less bites and insects to deal with is a bonus. Mostly, however, the tea needs the summer to dry completely, and to use the heat to begin the fermentation process before it is compressed. The tea is stored in large bags inside and outside—outdoors it is placed under awnings to protect it from the rain until the autumn (*as shown on the following page*).

Once the pressing has been completed, the tea should be placed in a vertical, open shed with exposure to sunlight (for drying) and nighttime dew (to increase the humidity in the tea and promote fermentation), but it cannot be drenched with rain. It should be left for forty-nine days. The fermentation process is thereby catalyzed by natural conditions, and the tea is self-fermented. The mists of the Heavens and Earth and the essence of sunlight will empower the tea leaves, and natural aromas (said to be akin to eucalyptus leaves) are absorbed into the tea, so that the longer it is stored, the better its quality. As the tea ages, it continues to ferment and also oxidizes with the years.

The Seven-Star Stove

Another special process in the production of black tea *maocha* in Anhua is the baking and drying using an open pine-wood fire and a seven-star stove. (Pine wood is also used in the production of Liu Bao tea, but using a different type of stove and method.) After drying, the tea is dark brown and shiny—a loosely smoked and roasted tea. The flavor is strong, and the tea liquor is red and thick. The taste is rich, and there is a thick smell of pine smoke in the room and infused into the leaves when this is done. The high forests on Anhua Mountain are dense, lush and green. The pine forests stretch over the mountains. Early tea makers used convenient, local materials, which also lent a desirable aroma of pine resin.

And why an open fire? Those who have burned firewood know that with an open fire, there is no smoke. In that way, only the drying/roasting tea aroma is bright. The pine aroma in the tea and in the air is subtler than the tea itself, in other words. Of course, no tea master would want to overpower his tea with pine, but rather add dimension to it.

The "seven-star stove" used in the drying of Anhua black tea is actually a very scientific method of making tea. A pine wood fire is lit under the stove and kept flat, which maintains a surprisingly uniform temperature. Using air currents to keep the temperature uniform and penetrate the seven holes it takes its name from, the stove allows the fire to spread evenly to the top of the bamboo baking curtain.

The tea leaves on the baking curtain are first laid down in a thin layer. After seven minutes, another layer is laid down, allowing the upper layer of tea moisture to pass through to the bottom. After looking at the degree of dryness, a third layer is spread in sequence, and then a fourth. Adding a fifth layer will depend on the temperature and thickness of the tea. Finally, the tea is turned over again and again—up and down—so that it dries evenly. This drying method is unique to the black tea processing of Anhua.

Tea drying outdoors through July and the stoves discussed above.

What are the differences between black tea and puerh tea processing?

Of course, the molding and compression is a special feature of the detailed and complicated processing of Thousand Tael tea. However, here we will present an explanation of black *maocha* production. Perhaps many people drinking new, high-grade black tea feel that the tea liquor is milder than sheng puerh, is warming and does not irritate their stomachs. It flows more smoothly into their mouths, and after drinking it for a whole day, they are comfortable and content—how is this so? Mainly it is due to the unique characteristics of black *maocha* production. The two follow the same trail through firing and rolling, but then puerh tea continues down a different path of sun-drying. Like shou puerh, which could be considered a black tea, Hunan black tea passes through artificial fermentation (heaping/piling, *wo dui*, 渥堆). The damp heat produces microbial chemical breakdown. This transformation makes the tea black and oily, and the taste becomes darker, richer and deeper. After undergoing continuous research, through various piling comparisons, the artificial fermentation process of Hunan black tea continues to evolve.

When we were on the ground in Hunan to understand all of this, a tea farmer told us that a good black *maocha* needs to be heaped three times. When the tea is harvested, it goes through the de-enzyming/kill-green process, rolling, and then after rolling is heaped using the natural humidity

of the tea. (This is different from shou puerh, which is sprayed with water.) This goes on for some hours (adjusted according to temperature and humidity), and the heat is generated by the effervescence of the fermentation process itself (as opposed to shou puerh, which often utilizes a thermal blanket to increase heat). Then the tea must be dried for the first time (for about three minutes), and then continuously piled for another fifteen hours, after which it is dried for a second time, to approximately fifty percent dry, followed by the third heaping stage, which lasts about an hour. Finally, the last drying requires the "seven-star stove," refining the black *maocha* through a pine wood open fire.

As I mentioned, the processing of puerh *maocha* also goes through the kill-green and rolling but then takes another route. After drying in the sun, it is divided into sheng and shou puerh (raw and ripe). If you want to make puerh *maocha* into ripe tea, it is necessary to sprinkle water over the piles and also use a thermal blanket. Due to the thickness of Yunnanese leaves, they require more heat and moisture, and also a much longer time period to ferment (usually forty-five to sixty days). As a result, the tea liquor of Hunan black tea is rosier and milder than sheng puerh tea, and more mellow and much softer than shou puerh, with less microbial density. Shou is creamier and darker as a result. (*All three are shown below.*)


千两茶踩制场


FAW

Hunan Black Tea in the Market 湖南黑茶市场

茶 *After the towers are pressed, they need to dry naturally. Much of the fermentation process of Qian Liang tea is natural, by which we mean that it is not induced by humans (we call that "artificial"). There is artificial fermentation in Thousand Tael tea production, but the elements are much more involved than with puerh processing. The towers are left outdoors to dry for forty-nine days. On the bottom we see the one-hundred-year-old factory made of wood, which still stands, and you can see the large trucks full of tea rolling up to unload at the new, modern facility across the street, contrasting the traditional with the modern in a characteristically Chinese way.*

Because Hunan black tea has an exquisite and unique craftsmanship, the quality of the vast majority of finished products is quite good. Also, there is a real absence of agrochemicals in black tea production, at least compared to other types of tea, which is inspiring and leads to better quality products. At present, this fermented tea with the fiery heat of puerh and the distinctive characteristics of black tea, fueled also by continuous research and publication from the Hunan Agricultural University, has caused Hunan black tea to rise up among the various teas available on the market. The University has conducted and published several papers on the health benefits of Hunan black tea and the "golden flowers" that often grow in it (a type of mold said to have health benefits—we have covered this in several past issues of Global Tea Hut). As a result, the number of black tea drinkers has increased rapidly, creating a large market.

In 2007, Baishaxi Tea Factory was restructured, and due to a sharp increase in business volume, the production methods changed. Fermentation was divided into two categories: one is a high-temperature fermentation, which uses a steam process, and the other uses higher-grade tea and adds water at a lower temperate for fermentation. A new factory is being built next door in response to anticipated larger future markets.

Anhua Tea Factory was built in 1902. In 1950, it became the first large state-owned tea factory in Hunan and a national tea sales and production enterprise, cultivating a generation of Hunan tea masters like Feng Shaoqiu (馮紹裘) and Huang Benhong (黃本鴻). It was Hunan's earliest tea education base and a founder of Hunanese mechanized tea production. The history and heritage of Anhua Factory is profound, affording it a leading position in Hunanese black tea production.

In recent years, China Tea Company has also clearly felt the charm of black tea. Focusing on development in Anhua, in 2008 the China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation (COFCO) publicly announced an investment of a hundred million *yuan* in construction of a 20,000-ton black tea processing project in Anhua that will achieve an annual output of 20,000 tons of "Chinese tea" brand black tea products. Having invested in the construction of a factory and its staff, and very wonderfully restoring the old craftsmanship, they have jointly developed a series of products to cater to the market. For example, the Xuefeng Golden Code is based on traditional techniques, and has been well-received in the Guangzhou and Taiwan markets. From the continuous entry and exit of trucks and the continuous movement of the old staff shuffling over the tea mountains, it is obvious that the China Tea Company is gearing up to be "South China's First Tea Factory." The old "Qian Liang" sign is being polished again.

In addition, in 2001, the former director of the Baishaxi Tea Factory, Wu Jianli, has built a tea factory inside the He Ancestral Hall on the old street of Dong City. Making sure traditional pressing techniques stay alive, as opposed to the newer trendy methods of the bigger factories, he wants to spread Thousand Tael hand-rolled tea to pass on the treasures of Chinese tea culture to future generations.

China Tea's Anhua Tea Factory holds onto a stable black tea market, repairing a century-old factory with one hand, and opening up new avenues of sales with the other. Baishaxi Tea Factory injected new blood in 2007, expanding the tea factory and entering the market with the force of more modern production methods (which some customers prefer, though not usually true tea lovers). Liyuanlong Tea Factory has held on for the last hundred years, located at the historical Tea Horse Road Station inside the ancient ancestral He hall. After several ups and downs, black tea has finally burst out of the historical clouds of the Old Tea Horse Road, and modern tea lovers are once again clamoring to taste the special craftsmanship of this fragrant tea.

Tea Wayfarer

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 Tarmo Aidantausta.

I'm from Finland, the country that consumes more coffee per capita than any other country. When I first tried coffee, I was three. Coffee somehow fits the way I was as a kid: Think of a spirited little fellow running around frantically getting into trouble. That was me, actually up until a few years ago. Nonetheless, tea was around in my childhood. My mother drank tea. However, the first inklings of how vast the Leaf is came to me when a friend prepared some Chinese loose leaf red tea for me in university. I remember being impressed. The tea was called "Lapsang Souchong." Already then tea worked as the social lubricant it is, and we became fast friends.

Gradually, I tried different kinds of teas. But it wasn't until a few years later when my second ever tea friend bought me a cake of puerh that I had another great revelation. To be honest, it wasn't immediate, but it gave me a push towards where I find myself now. Then, I was still drinking coffee almost daily, but it wasn't long after that I noticed the negative effects it was having on me: causing headaches and contributing to a growing stress. These symptoms weren't only due to coffee, of course, and the coffee I was consuming wasn't the greatest quality either, but that's when I switched to drinking only tea and started visiting tea houses more often.

At that time, there was a nice tea house in Helsinki that had more than twenty kinds of puerh and even some black tea (real black tea). It wasn't only that they had a good selection, but they were also really nice people. My collection of tea started growing and I attended multiple tastings they organized. After two years of using the tea house as my extended living room, I was heartbroken when they closed down. It left quite a void in my tea life, so after a year of agonizing I started a small tea community and found some new people to share tea with. We organized tea tastings and social events.

Through one of these Finnish teawayfarers, I met a few other people who had been to the Hut and attended tea ceremonies. And that's when I truly had my first heart-to-heart with the Leaf. Even though I had accidentally had an experience of finding stillness with Tea, as the attention and intention to quiet down was there, the experience was heightened. I knew this was something I had to learn. Changes in my life started to happen rapidly and manifested as a morning bowl tea practice.

I really surprised myself; after a month of drinking bowl tea, one day during lunch, I noticed that I was eating my meal with the same kind of attention and care as I had been making my tea earlier that morning. This and many examples of greater awareness have been the reasons why I've stayed committed to Tea as a path. Daily meditation, loving-kindness practice and prayers to Guan Yin are now the ways I start my day. The effects are really striking. I know because there are still some days when I feel like there's no space for them, be it when I'm visiting a friend or when I haven't listened to my heart. On those days there's a feeling that something is missing. While such days still occur, lately I've noticed how even they work as food for my practice.

茶人: ***Tarmo Aidantausta, Finland***

The small changes I make daily have had large and lasting effects. After I finish work and get home, I make a *chaxi*, take out a kettle and bowl and finally sit down for my daily medicine. That's what tea has become for me: an antidote for my busy brain. Often times, I do not have anyone to share my medicine with, but knowing that I'm part of this community, I really feel more connected and think of you all out there around the world sitting with me. Not always having people around reminds me to cherish the occasions when I can serve tea to someone or be served by someone. That finally brings me to why I'm writing this. I'd like to thank you for being there and letting me be part of this community! I've gotten so much out of this practice. I really couldn't think of my life without it or you. Together we are spreading love and tea to all parts of the globe—even the coffee-loving countries like Finland. And remember that if you are ever northward bound, don't hesitate to contact me; there's always a warm bowl steaming for you!

Inside the Hut

Coming Soon to Global Tea Hut Magazine

茶主题: *Tetsubins*

茶主题: *Chajin & Teahouses*

茶道

茶主题: *Classics of Tea*

茶主题: *Gongfu Experiments*

We need your help to get to a place where we can build your permanent Center, Light Meets Life. (And we do hope that you feel that our Center is yours, not ours.) If everyone in this community helped us find just one friend or a loved one to join Global Tea Hut, we would be looking for land and be breaking ground soon—we really are that close! Please help us spread the word about Global Tea Hut, sharing tea and love with your community in person and through social media. Also, let us know if you need any help with this!

Wu De will be in New York this coming June. We hope to see some East Coast friends at these events, which will be in the second half of the month. Stay tuned to our website for details!

Check out our live broadcasts on Facebook, Instagram and soon YouTube, which we do every month. Also, check out our "Life of Tea" podcast on Soundcloud and "Brewing Tea" video series on YouTube!

The 2019 Light Meets Life fundraiser teas are starting to slowly make their way to the Center. Keep an eye on the website, as we have some of the best and rarest teas we have ever offered, and they will sell out very quickly!

We wanted to remind you to use the app to set up your local community, to ask questions and to share your daily tea. The more of us who use the app, the better it will be. And if you use it regularly, you can also form a community with local Chajin and build a beautiful tea family wherever you are. There are currently thriving tea communities with weekly gatherings all around the world. This rich sharing is the spirit of Tea and the essence of what Cha Dao is about. Let the app bring us all together, even from a distance!

April Affirmation

I do one thing at a time

A great Zen master said that Zen is doing one thing at a time. When I multi-task, I may break my teaware. Doing one thing at a time makes for peaceful and present work. I live present and focused, doing one thing at a time.

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 are trying to move the office where the magazine and photography are created, and hopefully hire some help for Wu De as well. This will be a great expansion for the Center and for this community. With your support, we hope to do this some time in 2019!

As long-term volunteers come and go, we thought it worth reminding you that you can apply for a one-year stay at Tea Sage Hut if you have taken a course (and preferably served one as well). Contact us through the Tea Sage Hut website to learn more.

We are saving up to buy or lease a van to drive you around during service periods and to take you to the tea farm and mountain to fetch water during courses.

www.globalteahut.org

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

GLOBAL TEA HUT

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE