



July 2013

In July, the year passes its zenith on the summer solstice, and we enter the decline. The peak is a time of celebration, warmth and light, as well as a reminder to start preparing for the winter—literally and metaphorically—in all that we do. Crossing over into the second half of the year also teaches us about impermanence, as every upward climb reaches a peak and heads downward. And falling into the second half of this year makes it feel as if time is moving quickly, summer fleeting by us. A human life is precious, indeed. Let us celebrate the remaining warmth and light, cherishing our priceless time on this earth!

July is the perfect time for tea outdoors, and for being in Nature, traveling and moving. Birdsong is the perfect rhapsody for a summer tea session near a river. According to traditional Chinese wisdom, summer is a time for eating less, moving more and getting up earlier. It is also the perfect time to align yourself with the stars; perhaps sleeping outdoors under the open sky. Our teas get lighter with our spirit, and often move with a vibrant Qi that matches the world around us.

In the tea world, summer is a time for farmers to take it easy. There are some exceptions, of course. Some of you can remember the Eastern Beauty Tea we sent out last summer, made by Master Gu and his son. (You can read about it in the June 2012 newsletter—all of which are posted on our site.) Well, they are very busy this time of year, harvesting the bug-bitten leaves that will be heavily oxidized into this year's Eastern Beauty Tea. They aren't sleeping much these days, as the tea needs to be monitored day and night. Send some light out to them: for a good harvest, with juicy buds and delicious, golden liquor!

Summer is also the main harvest of Sun Moon Lake Red Tea, which we plan to send out again some time soon. As some of you remember, we get our SML tea from Mr. Shu, whose simple life in harmony with Nature has always astounded us. (You can read about him in previous newsletters as well.) This year there was a drought and a rare insect infestation around Sun Moon Lake. Mr. Shu told us that many farmers were busy spraying and re-spraying pesticides on their tea,

hoping that it would help. The particular bugs attacking the tea only come once every ten to twenty years, and together with the drought, many people there are struggling. Despite all the trouble, Mr. Shu has stayed committed to organic farming. With great wisdom, he told us: "Better to accept what Heaven gives us—fortune or misfortune—and thereby live in alignment with Nature and the Heavens, than to try to force our will onto things, which only brings greater misfortune in the long run. I may have less this year, but I will have more in another. It will all lead to balance..."

In the Chinese lunar calendar, this month will pass into the Lotus Moon. On the sixth day of this sixth moon, there is a Buddhist tradition of "Airing the Sutras". The old scrolls and teachings are taken out of the vaults, cleaned and were traditionally aired out to prevent molding. According to legend, the great monk Xuan Zhang returned to China with many scriptures only to drop some in water on this day. He rushed to dry them and ended up saving them all, allowing Buddhism to flourish in his kingdom. This small holiday has spread to other areas of life, and many Chinese Buddhists have traditionally used the occasion for washing bedding, clothes, books and even ritually bathing themselves in some regions.

On the thirteenth day of the sixth moon, some Chinese people celebrate the birthday of the God of Carpenters, Lu Ban. Lu Ban is said to have lived in the fifth century BCE, and was also an engineer, inventor and philosopher. In so many of the old Daoist tales, simple people end up showing great and wise people the true essence of life and Dao. Fishermen, carpenters and wheel-makers were equally able to achieve great enlightenment through dedication to their craft, with deep understanding of the roots of their life in Dao. As *Chajin*, we can also heed their example, finding a path and Way of life through something as simple as tea. The *Lu Ban Jing (Classics of Lu Ban)* gathers his wisdom on carpentry and life. The manual has been central to Daoist geomancy (*fengshui*) for thousands of years, detailing all aspects of how to orient a building so that it will be in harmony with the Earth and the Cosmos.