

Tea Wayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and tea are becoming, as the tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. This month we would like to introduce one of our first companions, **Xander Rijkee**:*

I grew up in a small village in the Netherlands on a mental diet of fairy tales, mythology and fantasy. When friends or relatives would ask me what I wanted to become when I grew up I always answered, "I want to become a wizard!" Eventually, I realized that was not going to happen and I did the next best thing... I became a physicist. The next decade or so I filled my mind with abstract things: logic, reason, philosophy, mathematics and I learned to create models with which to make predictions about the world. But I never lost the desire to dream and walk with my feet in the clouds, and like so many physicists I followed the circle of logic and reason and came out into the realm of spirituality.

Although I have always drunk tea as a beverage, the first seeds of tea drinking as a practice were sowed in Singapore's Chinatown where I visited a teahouse and tea school with my wife on our honeymoon. After a short demonstration of gongfu cha and we were left to brew on our own. While clumsily making tea a spark struck. Something awakened in me: an itch, a yearning, an urgency... Not quite as if my hair was on fire, but there was some definite smoldering going on...

When I got home, I tried to learn as much as I could, which was difficult in a country where tea was a bagged affair always accompanied by at least one biscuit. Eventually work and real life took hold of me again and the embers cooled. Half a year later my world collapsed. I lost the ability to focus my visual attention. I could not read, drive, cook, clean, sculpt or work, but I could drink tea.

Slowly, over time, my tea practice began to fill the void that was left by all the things that I could not do anymore, and I found something I could still grow in. But to be able to grow I needed information, a tradition, a master. None of that was to be found in Holland...

By coincidence I discovered the online magazine *The Leaf* and I have had many of its articles read to me by the computer many times. When I heard that the people who wrote it were about to start a sort of global tea community, I instantly joined. I have been in Global Tea Hut from the start, sharing many cups of tea with all of you.

This month I finally made it to Miaoli, to the Tea Sage Hut to experience the tea practice and living tradition for real. I cannot understate how important this experience has been. To see a living practice in action is far more powerful than reading about it. I have soaked up as much information and wisdom into my spiritual sponge as it will hold, to squeeze out and learn from later. When I get home, I will be able to revisit all the treasured articles, continue growing and practicing... And above all, drinking lots of tea...

If any of you ever find yourselves in the Netherlands wanting to escape the crowded streets of Amsterdam for a while, know that there is a friendly, warm place two hours drive to the south where you can have a quiet cup of tea.

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