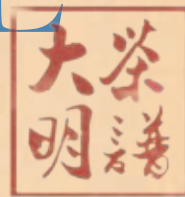
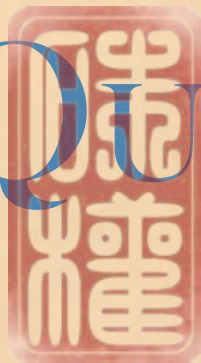


TEA MANUAL



BY

ZHU QUAN



朱權

朱權茶譜

Zhu Quan (朱權, 1378–1448) was the 17th son of the first Ming emperor, Hongwu (洪武, 1328–1398). When his fourth brother plotted to usurp the throne from the second Ming emperor, Quan, then a fourteen-year-old lad, was taken to Beijing and kept under “palace arrest” until his fourth brother ascended the throne. Consequently, after he was freed, he renounced politics and royalty and moved to the south. He completely refrained from politics, focusing his energy on his commentaries on various topics such as history, literature, poetry, theater, guqin and tea. Judging from the sobriquet he used for this little essay on tea, it was written around 1440, within the last decade of his life. The first Ming emperor banned the labor-intensive and intricately compressed tribute tea cakes in 1391, which also inspired gradual changes in brewing methodology. People moved away from whisking tea to steeping leaves in teapots. In addition, all tribute tea had to be sent to the emperor directly in order to minimize the possibility of bureaucratic corruption such as embezzlement or bribery. Under such circumstances, the traditional Song Dynasty whisked style (*dian cha*) died out within the fifty years leading up to the time Quan wrote this essay. Especially since he had been kept hostage at the palace when his elder brother was executing his coup, and then renounced all relation to a political life, one would think that he would be very cautious about expressing a controversial point of view. However, a good part of the following manual discusses then-forbidden tea methods. Was this a snide way of making a relatively tame political point?



Tasting Tea

Right before the solar term, *guyu*,¹ new tea buds, each but one leaf alone, are plucked to be ground into powder. They are then pressed to remove the moisture inside, ground into powder and finally pressed into round cakes. Some people dry tea leaves with other herbs that overpower their essential aroma and flavor. In general, tea that tastes light and sweet, with a fine, long-lasting aftertaste that awakens the Qi is the best kind of tea. The Bamboo Shoot tea from Mount Meng of Shandong Province is so unique that it is Heavenly.² Even though tea is essential in life, due to its coolness,³ it is not recommended for people with certain ailments to drink too much tea.⁴

Storing Tea

It is best to pick the young buds on a warm, dry day, storing them in a similar climate rather than a cold and humid place. The leaves are placed on a wooden rack with fire burning below to slowly roast them dry. Roast the tea every two or three days⁵ to keep the leaves at body temperature and humidity won't corrupt the tea. If the fire is too harsh, then the leaves will be burned. The tea leaves that are not being roasted should be sealed in an envelope and placed in a high place. If the flavor and taste became stale after some time, then boil them, rather than whisking or steeping, to improve the flavor. To create a tea with Heavenly Fragrance, one shall collect the petals of a newly-blossomed osmanthus.⁶ It is crucial that one only gathers these precious blossoms during a sunny noontide, so they will not overcome the fragrance of the tea.

Whisked Tea (*Dian Cha*⁷)

Before whisking tea, one should warm the bowls first.⁸ If the bowls are cool, then the tea will sink to the bottom. If there is not sufficient tea, then the white froth will not rise. The more tea there is, the easier it is for a white cream to ascend. Put one scoop of tea into the tea bowl and then pour a little hot water to dissolve the powder. Immediately after the powder is dissolved, add an adequate amount of hot water, filling the bowl in two of three thirds while whisking the liquor in graceful circular motions. A bowl that shows no mark where the water was is the best. People nowadays like to trade the fragrance of tea for that of flowers;⁹ among them plum blossoms, osmanthus and jasmine are the best. Put several flowers into tea cups and cover them immediately with hot water. In a matter of seconds, the dried flowers will blossom inside of the cup, opening to the heat and moisture, and one will smell the floral perfume long before the cup touches one's lips.

Scented Tea

Any kind of fragrant flowers is suitable to make scented tea, the best of which exudes but a hint of some favorable aroma. Pick the flowers when they are in bloom. Make a two-tiered bamboo lantern and place the flowers into the lower section while the tea leaves rest on the upper section. Seal the lantern tightly and let it sit overnight. On the following day, open the lantern and replenish the bottom with freshly-picked flowers. Repeat this procedure for several days, until the tea leaves absorb the lovely fragrance of the flowers. It is also possible to employ this technique with borneol instead of flowers.¹⁰



茶 Zhu Quan; artist unknown.

Notes

- 1) *Guyu* (穀雨) literally means “grain rain;” it is the eighth term of the Chinese solar calendar (around April 20th), and also the last one of the spring season. It is named as such because the farmers need rain after they plant rice and other grain seedlings. Therefore, they usually plant the seedlings right before the spring/summer rainy season.
- 2) This special *shixian* tea (石蘚), literally “moss on the rocks” tea came from Mount Meng (蒙山) of Shandong Province (山東). It was so rare that there is not much information about it other than the author's account. However, there is still Purple Bamboo Shoot tea (*zusun*, 紫笋) still made in Jiangsu.
- 3) “Coolness” in a Traditional Chinese Medicine sense.
- 4) The tea of the time was all astringent and green, and people often lacked the variety we have today. Still, some people can't drink too much cool tea even nowadays.
- 5) This may sound like an unrealistic and overbearing task, but in Medieval China, well-to-do families could have up to hundreds of servants for a ten-person household, so having the tea roasted every two to three days was, in fact, possible.
- 6) “Heavenly Fragrance Tea (*tianxiang cha*, 天香茶)” is scented with *Osmanthus fragrans* (*gui hua*, 桂花), a common medicinal herb used in Chinese medicine and cuisine, especially desserts.
- 7) We talked extensively about *dian cha* (點茶) in our translation of the Emperor Song Huizhong's *Treatise on Tea*. This is a type of whisked tea where water is poured repeatedly into the bowl as whisking continues throughout. More than that, however, “*dian cha*” refers to tea made with a “one-pointed mind,” which is the same character used to translate the Buddhist term “*samadhi*,” which also means “the fully-concentrated/one-pointed mind.” This term is deep, but a basic understanding is that once again, tea steeps the sacred and mundane together: a practical technique and powerful meditation in this case.
- 8) Zhu literally uses the word “bake,” but we think he maybe means rinsing them with hot water.
- 9) Literally, “exchange fruits/flowers for tea.”
- 10) In general, this referred to the leaves from the *Dipterocarp* family.

Cauldron

The cauldrons for making tea are the same as those used by Daoist alchemists. The size of them is seven *cun* high and four *cun* in diameter, with three-*cun*-high feet and a one-*cun* opening for air flow.¹¹ The inside of the cauldron is gilded with copper, which is extremely rare nowadays. Mine is a ceramic crucible inlaid with silver, which is even better. The height of the handle rungs is seventeen-and-a-half-*cun*, with woven rattan handles. There are hooks along the sides to hang utensils such as an ash brush, ladles, a sieve for water and a bellows.

Stove for Tea

In antiquity, stoves of this construction did not exist. I installed mine in the forest. Because it is earthenware, it looks like a stove for cooking, except the top is one-and-a-half-*chi* high, with another layer above, which is nine *cun* high, one-and-a-half-*chi* long and one *chi* wide.¹² I've decorated it with poems and odes to Tea. There are two vents on the lower part for adding coal or wood and the stove has two round openings to place water kettles. I positioned a fair-sized rock in the front as a seat for the tea master. I've found an eccentric octogenarian, a man without a name, who is childlike and simpleminded like a child. I have no idea where he is from, either. His attire is also otherworldly, in that he wears crane robes¹³ closed with a hemp belt and a pair of straw shoes. He is slightly hunched by age and his face is covered with countless wrinkles, even onto his neck. He has a pair of topknots on his head. Overall, he is shaped like the character for "chrysanthemum," so I've come to call him "Elder Mums."¹⁴ Each time he prepares tea at this stove, his purity multiplies the virtues of the tea.¹⁵

Mill

It is best to use *qingmeng* stone,¹⁶ as it breaks up phlegm that builds up in the lungs and throat according to Chinese medicine. Other materials are not as beneficial to the tea leaves.

Grinder

Traditionally, tea grinders are made of gold, silver, copper or iron. All of these are prone to corruption,¹⁷ so I favor *qingmeng* stone.

Sieve

The sieve for tea is made out of gauze and is five *cun* in diameter.¹⁸ If the gaps in the gauze are too small, then not enough tea powder will pass through the sieve. On the other hand, if the holes are too large, then the sieve won't sift out unfavorable impurities.

Racks

Most people use wooden racks with intricate and complicated decorations—not me. I use spotted bamboo or purple bamboo, which is the loftiest material for making a rack.

Spoons

Since the purpose of spoon is stirring, it needs to be powerful. In antiquity, people favored golden spoons, though there are many silver and bronze ones nowadays. Bamboo spoons are lightweight. I once had a spoon made of a coconut shell, and it is my favorite. After I had the coconut shell spoon made, I met a man who was blind in both eyes. Amazingly, he made hundreds of bamboo spoons of exactly the same size. Bamboo is suitable for making spoons that are different from the ordinary ones. Even though gold is very expensive, it is not any better than a bamboo spoon.

Whisk

The whisk is made out of bamboo, and those from southern places such as Guangdong and Jiangxi provinces are the best quality. The whisk is usually about five *cun*¹⁹ long. After scooping some tea powder into the bowl and then adding hot water, it is time to start whisking. When the white froth starts to form in clouds, a heavy rain falls in trails. Then it is time to stop whisking.

Bowls

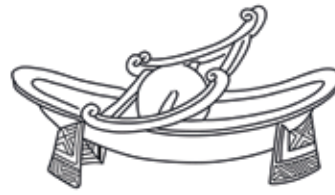
Traditionally, people used tea bowls from Jian'an.²⁰ Those that are decorated with fine pine needles or rabbit's fur are the most sought-after. Nowadays, tea bowls from the *Gan Kiln*²¹ look like those from Jian'an. However, after hot water is poured into the bowls, the hue of the tea liquor as viewed in *Gan* ware is not as bright as that in *Jian* ware. I prefer *Rao* ceramics,²² which offer a gorgeous, pale celadon color when the tea liquor is in them.

Kettle

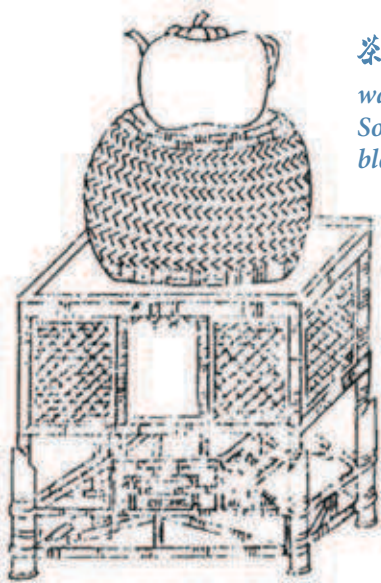
When the kettle is small, the time spent waiting for the water to boil is shorter. Furthermore, smaller kettles are easier to maneuver when pouring into tea bowls. Traditionally, kettles are made of iron and are called "*ying*."²³ During the Song Dynasty, people shied away from iron to avoid the inevitable rust in favor of ewers made of gold or pure silver. My kettle is ceramic and is five *cun* high with a two-*cun* neck and a seven-*cun* spout.²⁴ It is important to boil the water to the perfect point. If the water is not brought to such a boiling point, then a layer of dregs will float on the surface of the tea liquor. On the other hand, if the water is over-boiled, the tea will sink to the bottom of the bowl.



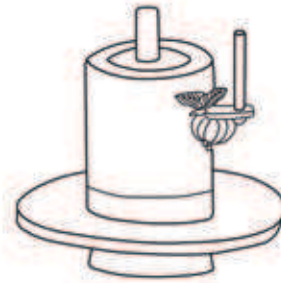
茶 Whisks were large and flat in those days.



茶 Grinders were used to re-powder the cakes for whisking.



茶 Kettles replaced spout-less water-heating vessels from the Song Dynasty, which resembled modern Japanese kamas.



茶 Mills were used to grind the leaves to be pressed into cakes.

Notes

11) Seven *cun* (市寸) is roughly ten inches, while three *cun* is about four inches.

12) 1.5 *chi* is about 1.6 feet, while 9 *cun* is about 12 inches.

13) Literally, such a coat was called a “crane’s cape.” It had sleeves and was not made out of actual crane feathers at the time the author lived. However, it is said that in ancient times, especially in the fifth century, Daoists wore coats made out of actual cranes’ feathers. By the fourteenth century, though, this was a generic name for any overcoat without any buttons. It is unlikely the author is referring to any old overcoat, though, due to all the other Daoist references in the description. Cranes were sacred to Daoists, and the undertones here are also mystical. Cranes balance large bodies on small legs for many hours and are so tranquil they look like they are asleep when they are actually very alert waiting for fish to pass.

14) The double-bun hair style was traditionally reserved exclusively for young female servants. The topknots are likened to the grass radical *ao* (艹) of the character *ju* (菊), and the bottom part of the character to the fanciful shape of the elder’s misshapen body.

15) This paragraph is highly mystical, stylized and very probably metaphoric. In many Daoist stories, the seeker looking for the Daoist master passes by an ordinary person and asks directions to the master’s abode, only to later find out that the ordinary person he asked for directions was, in fact, the master himself. The author

may be alluding to the fact that the brewer find the master inside, and that our highest self then sits on the stone seat and prepares the tea. Also, the story suggests that we not pass by nor dismiss the ordinary. That is not the Way of Tea! Overall, Zhu Quan, a famous Daoist, is having a bit of fun with us, his readers.

16) The *qingmeng* stone (Lapis Chloriti, 青礞石) is the Biotite Schist and Maica Carbonate Schist formed by chloritization.

17) We think he means what we would call rust and/or oxidation.

18) Five *cun* is about six inches.

19) Six inches. This is much bigger than modern tea whisks from Japan.

20) Jian’an (建安) is modern-day Jian’ou City (建甌) in Fujian Province (福建).

21) *Gan* ware (淦窯) is probably *Jizhou* ware (吉州窯), which was made in modern-day Yonghe Township (永和), Ji’an County (吉安), Jiangxi Province (江西).

22) This may be the celadon ware from Jingdezhen (景德鎮), but we can’t be sure.

23) “*Ying* (罌)” refers to a jar with a small mouth and a large belly; these kettles were shaped like such storage jars.

24) Five *cun* is about six inches.

Brewing Tea

It is crucial to boil one's water with flaming coal, which is termed "live fire," so that the water will not be heated in vain. In the beginning, the bubbles appear haphazardly like fish eyes. Then, more air emerges, and the bubbles are like spring water or a string of pearls. At the last stage, the bubbles grow larger and the water boils violently like the high tide. At this point, all the vapor in the water vanishes into the air. This is the so-called "three boiling" method that can only be achieved with lively, flaming coals.

Ranking Water

The tea immortal Qu²⁵ ranks water sources for tea as follows: the Qi spring at the Elder's Village in Qingcheng Mountain²⁶ is the best, Eight Virtue Water from Mt. Zhong²⁷ is the second best, Vermilion Pond at Red Cliff²⁸ is the third best, while the water from Bamboo Root Spring²⁹ is the fourth best. Others might conclude that the water from mountains is superior to that from a river, which is in turn superior to the water from wells. However, Bochu³⁰ commented that the water from the middle of the Yangtze River is the best, while the Stone Spring at Hui Mountain³¹ ranks second. He claims that the Stone Spring at Tiger Hill³² is the third best, while the Danyang Well³³ is the fourth. Daming Well³⁴ is the fifth, Song River³⁵ is the sixth and Hui River³⁶ is the seventh. Others might argue that the water from Kangwang Cave on Mount Lu³⁷ is the best and the Stone Spring at Hui Mountain³⁸ is the second best. The water from under the rocks at Lan Brook in Qizhou³⁹ is the third best and the water from the Lower Caves at Shanzixia, Xiazhou⁴⁰ is the fourth best. The water from Tiger Hill in Suzhou is the fifth best and the Stone Bridge Pond on Mount Lu is the sixth best. The cold water from the middle of the Yangtze River ranks the seventh best while the Xishan waterfall at Hongzhou⁴¹ is the eighth best. The water from upstream of the Hui River, at Botong Mountain in Tangzhou,⁴² is the ninth best and the water from Dingtiandi on Mount Lu is the tenth best. The water from Danyang Well in Runzhou is the eleventh best and the water from Daming Well in Yangzhou ranks the twelfth. The cold water from upstream of the Han River⁴³ in Jinzhou is the thirteenth and the water from Fragrance Brook at Yuxu Cave in Guizhou⁴⁴ is the fourteenth. The water from West Valley, Wuguan at Shangzhou⁴⁵ is the fifteenth and the Song River in Suzhou is the sixteenth. The waterfall in the southwestern slope of Tiantai Mountain⁴⁶ is seventeenth, while the Yuan Spring at Chenzhou⁴⁷ is the eighteenth. The tributary water of the Yanling area of the Tonglu River⁴⁸ in Yanzhou is the nineteenth while the snow-melted river water there ranks twentieth.⁴⁹



茶 Zhu Quan statue at the new Wuyi tea-themed park, which we covered the inauguration of.





茶 Temple on Qingcheng Mountain early in the morning, the best time for gathering spring water.

Notes

- 25) The tea immortal Qu (醜仙), literally means “emancipated immortal.” This is Zhu Quan’s sobriquet. He recorded 64 *guqin* songs in a work entitled *Fairy Qu’s Fantastic Music for Guqin*, which is the first *guqin* music shorthand tablature in Chinese history, using a notation of fingering rather than pitch. It combines all of the fingering elements into one character, including the specific string and fret for both hands, ways of playing (pluck or press), duration of playing and intensity of each note.
- 26) Qingcheng Mountain (青城山) is one of the most ancient mountains where Daoists gathered to cultivate themselves millennia ago. It is 68km west of Chengdu City (成都), Sichuan Province (四川). It is a UNESCO world heritage site.
- 27) Mt. Zhong (鍾山) is near Nanjing City (南京), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).
- 28) The Vermilion Pond (丹潭) is located in Nanchang City (南昌), Jiangxi Province (江西).
- 29) Bamboo Root Spring (竹根泉) might be on modern-day Hainan Island (海南島).
- 30) According to *Notes on Jiancha Shuicha* (煎茶水記) written by Zhang Youxin (張又新), around the year 825, Liu Bochū (劉伯芻, 758–818) was Zhang’s father-in-law’s friend, so Zhang probably got this information firsthand.
- 31) Hui Mountain (惠山) is located in modern-day Wuxi City (無錫), Jiangsu Province.
- 32) Tiger Hill (虎丘) is near Suzhou City (蘇州), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).
- 33) There are four Danyang Cities (丹陽) in China: Zhenjiang City (鎮江) in Jiangsu Province (江蘇), Ma’anshan City (馬鞍山) in Anhui Province (安徽), Nanjing City (南京) in Jiangsu Province (江蘇), and Fuzhou City (福州) in Fujian Province (福建).
- 34) Daming Well (大明井) is located in modern-day Yangzhou City (揚州), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).
- 35) The Song River (松江) runs through Suzhou and Shanghai.
- 36) The Hui River (淮河) runs through Henan (河南), Hubei (湖北), Anhui (安徽) and Jiangsu (江蘇) provinces.
- 37) Mt. Lu (廬山) is near Jiujiang City (九江), Jiangxi Province (江西). It is a UNESCO world heritage site.
- 38) Changzhou (常州) is close to modern-day Wuxi City (無錫), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).
- 39) Qizhou (蘄州) is located in modern-day Qichun Township (蘄春), Hubei Province (湖北).
- 40) Xiazhou (峽州) is located in modern-day Yichang City (宜昌), Hubei Province (湖北).
- 41) Hongzhou (洪州) is located in modern-day Yuzhang County (豫章), Jiangxi Province (江西).
- 42) Tangzhou (唐州) is located in modern-day Nanyang City (南陽), Henan Province (河南).
- 43) The Han River (漢江) originates in Hanzhong City (漢中), Shaanxi Province (陝西).
- 44) Guizhou (歸州) is located in modern-day Zigui County (秭歸), Hubei Province (湖北).
- 45) Shangzhou (商州) is located in modern-day Shangluo City (商洛), Shanxi Province (陝西).
- 46) Tiantai Mountain (天台山) is a famous Buddhist and Daoist site, located in Taizhou City (台州), Zhejiang Province (浙江).
- 47) Chenzhou City (郴州) is in Hunan Province (湖南).
- 48) The Tonglu River (桐廬) runs through Zhejiang Province (浙江).
- 49) We should be both inspired and discouraged by the fact that our masters’ masters had access to so many different kinds of water for tea and could travel around drinking from streams, springs, brooks, tributaries, wells and lakes, comparing and ranking their waters as well as the way they enhanced or detracted from certain teas. This is a call to action for all those who love tea, which means you love Nature. Such experiences shouldn’t be a lost dream; it should be the right of every human on this Earth, beneath Heaven, to find clean water everywhere!