

Global Tea Hut



NEWSLETTER #11, DECEMBER 2012

When you share a single bowl of frothy tea, handed to you spinning like the greater celestial orbits happening above, you can sometimes close your eyes and feel the others drinking, as if they were your own. We spin the bowl out of respect, offering our neighbor a place distinct from where we've put our mouth, but also as a symbol of our harmony with Nature. There is magic in sharing a single bowl of tea with some loved ones—deep and lasting. And there is a way in which this Global Tea Hut is our whisked bowl, handed round to each of you: like the tea, it has been cultivated with great care and love, time and energy; and like the bowl of tea, we send it round selflessly and with a great respect for each of you. We are honored by your participation.

This is a very special month for us all, in so many ways. The holidays are always a great time of year to share gifts lovingly. It is a time for forgiveness, family and friends. Though the spirit of this month is sometimes lost in the commercialism that preys upon it, we should never postpone the opportunity to show our love—to friends, family and strangers alike. This time of year can afford us a great excuse to share a smile, a kind word or a bowl of nice tea.

This December also marks the end of the Mayan calendar, which many believe to be a time of transition for us as a species—a movement forward into greater harmony and consciousness. This “galactivation”, as the great Gregory Wendt calls it, will turn the volume up on the earthly and cosmic rhythms that we've lost touch with. They've never stopped playing—these Nature songs—but many humans have stopped listening. We hope that Global Tea Hut can play a greater role in this shift, and that the coming year will truly be one of global change. Our part is in the sharing of this ancient medicine, older than the Sphinx, that it may awaken a connection to Earth, Sky, Spirit in you; and through that the peaceful connection we all long for in our one, true Heart.

Not only is December a time for giving, it is also a time for receiving, which is sometimes the harder of the two. This month we have a huge announcement

to make (you'll be reading about it later in the issue). We have been blessed this month, and our plans to create a permanent center here in Taiwan have begun to take form in a much more dramatic way, shifting from dream to reality. Many of you know that we have a flourishing school/center in Miao Li, Taiwan. Some of you have even come here to visit, experiencing first hand what it is that we are offering. Our dreams are larger. We dream of a permanent center in the mountains, with a prospering tea farm, Japanese Zen gardens, vegetable plots and free residence for any and all of you who plan on coming in the future. We also dream it all green and ecological: solar powered electricity and hot water, organic farming, green building materials, etc. And when that day comes, we'll host annual ten-day gatherings where we can all make this global hut a true circle of tea shared, rather than from a distance (which is nice, but can't take the place of all the hugs we will one day share).

This is a very real turning point for us all. We are building this center as much for you as we are for ourselves to live in. We hope that you will all come and stay periodically, learning about Cha Dao as well as tea farming. Who knows, maybe in a couple years we will have a month of tea sent out to you that we have grown ourselves! There is still a lot to do in the coming years, but we know that it will proceed with the grace that has gotten us this far.

This is also a season of gratitude. We want you to know that we are all here deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve you and create these envelopes, as well as for your kindhearted financial support. We pray that you have a wonderful holiday season, filled with the warmth of those you love. There is a warm bed and steaming cup ever awaiting you here should you find yourself Eastward-bound. You can be warmed by that as well. You are in our prayers, and they are offerings of joy, health and happiness...

YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, DECEMBER 2012

1970's Oolong Tea, Miao Li, Taiwan



To celebrate all the holidays, and in gratitude for all your support through 2012, we have used some extra funds to get a very special tea for this month. Normally, the teas for these envelopes are freely donated by vendors and farmers who wish to connect with all of you, sharing their hard work with the world. However, this month Mr. Tsai, whom you met in April, donated two-thirds and we pitched in the other third to make the holiday season a special one. So, without further ado, we present your December Tea of the Month: a 1970's Oolong from Miao Li County, Taiwan.

Aged tea is great in the winter, as it is warming. This tea will light you up, filling your body with peaceful and warming sensations, calming your mind and uplifting your spirit. The Qi is deep and calm, you'll find, with a Yin rising. Mr. Tsai stored this tea himself for more than a decade, so the energy is clean and pure. It is well-stored without much mustiness, so you will find berries and fruit, wood and incense overlaying many other flavors. It is also incredibly patient, which means you can brew it morning to night through dozens of steepings.

There are many reasons why tea sages have always sought out aged tea, some of which we discussed in an article for last month's newsletter. Aged trees are also more alive and wise, with deeper roots and more connection to Earth and Sky. The first and foremost reason why tea sages nowadays prefer aged tea is that the Earth was cleaner back in the day. In the 1970's, when this tea was produced, there were little to no pesticides used on tea farms in Taiwan. There was no need for the distinction "organic", as all farming was natural and ecological. The earth itself was also cleaner, with less air and water pollution and better soil. And physical pollution isn't the only kind; there is also spiritual contamination. The farmers who made this month's tea weren't saints—actually, they were very simple people—but their food was all local and organic. They didn't eat lots of meat because it was a luxury. They drank wine they fermented themselves and smoked home-grown tobacco. There was a steadiness in their hand, and they knew the land, the tea trees and the soil like their own bodies, for they had never done anything else in their lives. Nowadays, a farmer's life is complicated by cell phones, video games, the Internet, not to mention all the toxins in mass-produced cigarettes, alcohol and processed foods. There are exceptions, of course, but few today demonstrate the purpose, mindfulness

and natural affinity for growing and processing tea that the older generations had. Still, there are places—ways and means—that modern consciousness is even transcending that, since our ancestors' natural and organic lifeways were unconscious, a part of the landscape so to speak. Now, we have the opportunity to *choose* sustainable, ecological, earth-centered lifeways and apply our consciousness to evolving them to new heights!

A cleaner environment may explain why aged teas are favored by modern tea sages, but not why even ancient masters chose to age their tea. A living tea doesn't die in the processing; it lives on in the essence of the leaves. Tea has a way of going into retreat when it enters the jar, meditating the years away. And as a living being, it grows wiser, deeper and more concentrated. On the physical level, the cells break down and more of the juice comes out. With some teas, like Puerh, bacteria plays a large role in the change over time. Nevertheless, the way a tea changes from green and astringent to deep, dark and transcendent over time is a great mystery.

There is a growing trend amongst tea lovers to try to explain the changes in tea over time, but there really is no answer to why. It is not a manmade process; it is natural. There is nothing to do; you just leave the tea in a quiet, dark place and protect it from mold, water, or other disasters. It will change on its own. Spiritually, its energy is alive and growing just as our consciousness is evolving. If you ask the old-timers how they stored their tea they will look at you askance: "What a silly question! I just put it on a shelf. What do you mean how did I store it?!"

The fact is that there is a special magic in aged tea. And nothing but drinking it will bring understanding of that. Some people believe that only Puerh can be aged, but that is not true at all. All tea can be aged, and all tea gets better with age. Puerh does have a special reputation for its age-ability, because of the many hundreds of species of mold and bacteria that cover the leaves long before they are picked, but it isn't even the only tea with such fermentation. Black tea is another example. Lighter teas are also tricky, as white, green and yellow teas are very nice when drunk fresh. However, they can indeed be aged to great effect, though it will take longer for them to change fully since their oxidation is often arrested dramatically and they are also composed more exclusively of buds (at least if they are fine quality). We have had fifty and even hundred-year-old green teas that were as dark as an aged Puerh and as



Ancient Oolong processing center

rich and full of Qi. We have at the center a 120-year-old jasmine green tea that is absolutely stunning. We also have some amazing ten-year-old Long Jing green tea. (Remind us to prepare them for you when you visit!) Still, there is also a special magic in fresh green, white and/or yellow teas. As with all things tea, there is no formula—you must choose based on each tea individually.

Oolongs age very well and often faster than Puerh. Furthermore, Puerh is a sensitive tea to age. It requires high humidity, airflow and seasonal temperature fluctuations—a subtropical environment, in other words. Otherwise, the bacteria and molds will die and the tea's Qi with them. Teas stored in dry climates often lose all Qi, as well as flavor and aroma, in ten to fifteen years. Oolong, however, prefers a dry, sealed environment without any changes at all. This means that most of you, no matter where you live, can successfully store Oolong tea with great results. Ideally, you will want to choose a tea with a bit more oxidation and heavier roast—a more full-bodied, traditional Oolong. Fill a jar completely so that there is less oxygen inside. (You may want to use a glazed jar so air doesn't come in through the pores and because the clay will influence the tea.) Seal the lid with wax, laying a string within the melted wax so that you can break the seal easily. Keep the tea somewhere dark, clean and quiet. Energy matters, so send it some love, put some affirmative words on the

outside or place it near an altar. After ten, fifteen or even fifty years you will have an awesome tea awaiting a reunion.

Our Tea of the Month also comes from Miao Li, which is the home of our center, making it extra special. Most of the tea this old was not intentionally stored to start with, but rather cast aside. For that reason, it was originally not stored very well. But the decade with Mr. Tsai has more than made up for that. Nowadays, Miao Li County farmers only produce Oriental Beauty, though in the 1970's they were making more Oolong. This is a striped Oolong, akin to the Rock Teas produced in Wuyi, Fujien, which is where most Taiwanese tea farmers originally came from.

Since this is a precious tea, you may want to brew it gongfu style. And of course share it with some beloved human souls, especially since this is the season for giving, sharing and loving. May all the age and wisdom of this tea be your very own, and may it radiate from your eyes—full of your light, may it then bless all those whose paths you cross...

** As we mentioned in previous months, we recommend letting the tea get over its jet lag. Let it sit a week or two and become acclimatized.*

HOW OOLONG GOT ITS NAME

By Wu Diddly

The old man sipped his tea. He had never grown weary of that flavor. His father had picked Oolong tea, as had his father's father and grandfather. And his young grandsons would also one day pick tea just like his daughter did now. It all made sense in a comfortable kind of way. He was proud to be a farmer of Oolong tea, and took pride in the fact that it was the best tea in all the Kingdoms. Even the great emperor, Lord of Heaven and Earth, was said to prefer the taste of Oolong above all else. The old man nodded, agreeing with his own thoughts. He drained his cup and watched his two grandsons sprint across the yard towards the house, the dying sun infusing the sky behind them in the same sweet amber liquor he'd just finished.

The village boys were only clean right after a bath, and even then but briefly. The old grandpa didn't mind having them on his lap though. He loved the boys, as his grandpa had once loved him when he came home dirty and ruffled by a day of adventure. He too had once sat on his grandfather's bony lap and listened to stories. He smiled now at his own bony knees. It was a smile

of contention. He was a part of something longer and greater than himself. His reminiscence of his family's legacy in tea put him in the mood to share it with the boys. He poured them each a cup of tea and laughed at the awkward way they held the cup, smelling the liquor as he had once taught them. He ruffled little Chang's hair. "Do you know what makes Oolong tea so special?" his bushy white brow flared in askance.

"I do." Said the older Chen, not waiting for recognition. "Its because of the shaking."

"That's good Chen," he sighed patiently. He poured them each another cup. "Let me tell you about the origin of Oolong tea." The boys ignored the tea and stared at him with rapt, glimmering eyes. Grandpa's stories were the highlight of their evenings...

"Long, Long ago people here picked tea just the way they do now. And they fried, shaped and fermented it just the same too. But they didn't know how to shake it the way we do. Oolong tea wasn't the great treasure it is today, and the farmers had a hard time selling it." He looked at the children in mock-seriousness,





“And the children had to work all day instead of playing by the river.” The older one moaned and the younger Chang gasped in disbelief. “At that time there was one farmer named Wu Long Wang. He actually liked hunting much more than picking tea. He was young and loved to daydream, and rarely brought home his quota of leaves. And that was why he was nicknamed ‘Wu Long’ or ‘Black Dragon’, because he always took so long to gather his leaves that he was tanned dark by the sun. His family was always complaining. No one thought any good would ever come of him. He did occasionally redeem himself, though, by bringing home a good catch to share for dinner. Wu Long Wang took his bow with him everywhere. He wasn’t any good at picking tea or farming, but he sure was a great shot with that bow. In fact, the village’s annual archery contest was the only time everyone liked Wu Long Wang. The rest of the year he was a just a lazy dolt.” He paused to remind Chen of the virtues of hard work.

“One day Wu Long Wang’s father told him that he had better bring back a whole basket of tea leaves or he’d break his bow over his head. Wu Long Wang worked hard all morning and afternoon and filled his basket with the best leaves he could find. Just as he was about to sit down and be lazy, he saw the biggest, plump-est rabbit he’d ever seen. It noticed him and darted away. Wu Long Wang sprinted after the rabbit, without even

thinking of setting down the basket of tea on his back. Half of the leaves flew out behind him in a trail, but he didn’t stop. He had to have that rabbit.” The old man paused dramatically to let the boys imagine the chase. “Finally after an hour or two, the rabbit grew tired and Wu Long Wang used his bow to shoot it. He was so proud he didn’t even stop to rest, but skipped merrily back to the village. He showed his father the rabbit, but his father only had eyes for the half empty basket of tea. He grabbed Wu Long Wang’s bow and” the old man mimicked breaking the bow over Chen’s head and both the boys laughed. “Wu Long Wang went to bed with no dinner. He was very sad. For two days and nights, his father refused to speak to him. On the third morning, the village elders were all waiting for Wu Long Wang when he woke up. He thought he was in big trouble for sure. To his great surprise they all shook his hand, congratulating him and asking him if he had slept well. He looked at them confused.

‘Wu Long Wang’ they said, ‘the tea you picked two days ago was the best tea we have ever had. All of the elders in the village have tasted it and agree that it is heavenly. You must show us where you picked it.’ Wu Long Wang showed them where he’d found the tea, but they had picked that tea before. They asked him to tell them exactly what had happened that day.” The old

How Oolong Tea Got Its Name

6 man set Chang on the ground next to his brother and leaned in, “and do you know what they found out?”

“I do, I do” said Chen excitedly, “All the running had shaken up the tea leaves and that’s why they tasted so good.”

“Clever boy” he patted Chen’s head. “And from then on, we have always shook the tea. The village elders were so happy with Wu Long Wang that they named the new tea ‘Oolong’ after him. He was allowed to hunt and daydream for the rest of his days, as he

pleased.” He looked at the boys and asked, “Do you know the moral of the story?”

“Yes grandpa, I remember” replied little Chang, “daydream a lot, but don’t forget to jump at the rabbit when it comes.”





8 EXTRATERRESTRIAL REFLECTIONS ON AGED OOLONG

Article by Kaiya

I remember that before I had really learned anything at all about tea I thought the only Oolong teas in the world were the green, high-mountain ones. Shortly after moving to Taiwan and starting to frequent the Hut, however, I was introduced to my first aged Oolong tea. I remember distinctly that it was my first time learning what was meant by “Cha Qi”; in fact it was my first aged tea experience of any kind. Most of these kinds of teas are accidentally stored; tossed in the back of a shop somewhere after not selling out that year, and they vary widely in quality. Now I must admit that my experience with aged Oolongs is not vast by any means. Well-stored aged Oolongs tend to be quite expensive, and are somewhat rare to boot. Luckily, I was very fortunate to buy an uncommonly affordable, intentionally stored, 25-year-old Oolong tea of definite vintage and locale with which I could familiarize myself a bit with the genre. In the meantime, I’ve had individual opportunities to drink perhaps a dozen or more others, and so you’ll hopefully find some of this experience interesting or useful to you as you explore your Tea of the Month.

To me, aged Oolongs seem to occupy a space in the world of teas that is difficult to describe, I guess because they have what almost seem to be some conflicting qualities. It’s important to remember that Oolong-teas are the most refined teas out there. This means that they have the greatest subtleties of flavor, body, and Qi. But it seems to me that as they age, some of these subtleties are lost, while the most defining qualities of the tea become more robust and developed, perhaps because the only other aged tea I have much experience with is Puerh. I find that aged Oolongs remind me of aged Puerh: they are earthier, have a deeper body, a deeper Qi, yet they retain greater complexity and refinement than aged Puerh tea. It could be, however, that these similarities are more the similarities of aged tea rather than these two genres.

I also find it hard to describe the Qi of many aged Oolongs. Are they Yin or Yang? Although my experience is that the Qi does dip down into the chest more and spread into the body more dramatically in aged Oolongs than it does in younger ones, which generally rise strictly upwards, I have yet to drink one





where I felt powerful Qi deeper than about the heart level. Well, there was one time, but that was an outrageously old tea, and not worth discarding this observation over.

My 25-year-old tea is definitely more Yin than Yang at this point, however. I still wouldn't play a really deep rhythmic chant while drinking it as I often would drinking a 25-year-old Puerh; aged Oolongs simply aren't nearly as deep. Instead, if I want to have a quiet session, I may play something rhythmic and steady, but it will be more in the middle of the scale, not too deep and not too high. Just as often, however, I find that I might listen to something lyrical and soothing. I suspect this is because the hand of man is so much more present in the tea because of the processing; Oolong teas in general leave me feeling a bit more talkative than most teas, and so I guess listening to music that has words comes out of that.

All in all, aged Oolong teas are definitely one of my favorite teas to drink, and many of you are in a good season to drink them now as well. They are great for cool to cold weather. I enjoy them especially in the afternoon and also find they are suitable as evening teas

with their soothing, relaxed energy. As always, though, remember that nothing is a substitute for experience, and mine is still quite limited; I'm sure it's even less than many of you out there, so if nothing else maybe you can find some inspiration here to share your own experiences this month with everyone on the forums! We'll look forward to hearing all about it...



One of the best Gongfu tips we can give you is to stay open-minded and humble. Always revisit old experiments. Sometimes you may not have noticed anything in the first try, but the results will stand out clear as day the second or even third time you try. Other times you will notice the result more distinctly; and sometimes you will come to appreciate different aspects of the experiments—facets you hadn't noticed before.

When doing Gongfu experiments, it is important to maintain such open-mindedness, especially in learning from experienced brewers. Just because you cannot distinguish between two methods clearly doesn't mean there isn't a difference. It is okay to brew your tea in the way that is comfortable to you, but it is a good idea to periodically revisit the core experiments to see if you get different results, and do so with an open mind. Sometimes one of our teachers would describe a sensation we were incapable of discerning. We would therefore not necessarily incorporate that particular aspect into our tea brewing. However, we always stay humble, listen and try the experiment again later. Many times we find that as time passes, we come to find our teachers' methods have a basis in genuinely improved tea.


When doing Gongfu experiments remember to focus on the mouthfeel more than the flavor or aroma. For that reason it is helpful to use a tea you're extremely familiar with and brew it lighter than you usually do. It may also be useful to alternate the experiment with water. Even if you feel that you discern a radical difference, you will still benefit from returning to the same experiment annually.

Try the core Gongfu experiment again: use three identical cups. Pour into the first. Then pour half of that into the second and half the second into the third. If you did this experiment last time with water, try it with tea (or vice versa). What happens to the liquor as it travels from cup to cup? How would you describe the changes? Are they qualitative? Are there any features you notice this time around which you didn't before?

Humility is a very important part of the Spirit of Tea. For that reason, we should never cultivate a sense of expertise or an air of superiority. Always be willing to learn and to improve your tea brewing, which is to improve yourself. When giving workshops we always tell the students that we will promise to never, ever judge the way you make tea if you promise to always keep learning and improving!





 In a small town like Viljandi, Estonia, you're bound to meet some people with folk wisdom. With a population of 20,000 it's a town indeed (there's a mall, a strip club and a Chinese restaurant after all) but talk to the people and you know it's essentially a village with town aspirations. The old part of town is a snapshot of the 19th century—almost as if the last hundred and fifty years had not happened. This timeless aura has infused many locals with a sense of the eternal, and the predictable rhythm of the passing, distinct seasons have given many whose lives are still closely dependent on the land some inkling of natural laws. These folk have lived off the land since childhood—they may not be Tantric masters or savvy system players, but they seem to have a deeper understanding of how life (as in Nature, not the Samsara we usually call 'life') works than busy city folk. My vision may be awash with romantic illusion, but humor me, go on. It's an article!

The public sauna (or *banya* in Russian) is a place where life truths tend to be discussed. The sauna is a particularly eastern European and Russian tradition, a space where all are equal, where people go to bare all in front of nonjudgmental friends and lose themselves for a few hours in a heat that envelops, comforts and washes away all that is unnecessary. This is not the tiny, dry sauna found in the western-style gym, nor the gay bathhouse variant—in both of these one can certainly bare all in front of appreciative onlookers but little in terms of acquisition of life wisdom usually occurs.

I just returned from the public sauna in this little town of Viljandi and returned several grams lighter, ready for deep sleep—and a little wiser. I met Jaak there, a mason who built the hearth in my apartment here. A hearth is an antiquated concept for almost anyone living in cities in the developed world, at least for the last 70 years, but before that most any house had as its heart the hearth—a kind of wood-burning furnace/fireplace with extended stone or brick encasing whose job it was to heat the entire home in days before electricity or central heating. It was usually placed in the centre of the house and its walls therefore formed a part of several rooms which surrounded it, heating many parts of the household. In these parts, every older house still has one.

Jaak is over sixty, has a strong build and his grey-white beard and hair lend a friendly dignity to his still-handsome face. I see he struggles a bit with emotional issues. He seems to have been unlucky at love, despite being a charmer and a looker, and is a loner at heart. His son is an alcoholic and he has been betrayed by friends too many times to take too many new ones close to

heart. But wow, this guy is cool: dedicated to his craft, loyal and with a true respect for the world of objects as living beings. It took him about ten months to built my hearth, usually a two month job, as it simply took the time it needed to do it properly, to do it justice. It wasn't a matter of how fast he could get it done, but of how long the hearth needed to be completed.

So there we were, sitting next to each other in the oppressive, sometimes scalding yet still comforting heat, talking about the universally-shared feeling among *banya*-goers of being beyond the reach of the outside world, of having pleasantly dropped out. Outside in the shower area, surrounded by older men dousing themselves with water from metal pails or scrubbing their whatnots on the stone slab benches, I took the opportunity to ask something I'd been wondering earlier in the day: why was the heat he created out of my hearth different from the heat I created in it? I know how and when to regulate the valves and how to start a nice fire but it seems I don't get the hearth quite as piping hot as he can.

Turns out I'm too tentative and conservative with the amount of wood I use: he stuffs some 30 slabs of wood in there and gets a roaring, blazing fire going from the start. It's this intensity, later captured in the glowing coals which maintains high heat once the final valve is closed. In contrast, I tend to use 5 or 6 wood slabs and get a sweet, picture-perfect fire going which is nice to read a book in front of but which will not heat a home.

"The hearth is constructed to heat a large area, it will do its job well if it's treated well," he explained. "If you feed it well and treat it as it wants to be treated, it will give back in spades. If you don't, it will also give that back."

Law of Attraction?

Sweet story, you're welcome, but what's it doing in a tea-related newsletter? Where's the Cha Dao in this tale of naked masochists and antiquated fireplaces? And what if anything has it to do with Wu De's recent visit? He wasn't one of the naked guys beating themselves with birch branches, after all.

Glad you asked. As I was sitting on the stone bench scrubbing my whatnots, I found that Jaak's words reminded me of a story that Wu De told when he was here in Estonia at our tea drinking sessions and workshops: about a student of his who had felt a total personal transformation after drinking tea for two years, whereas some teashop owners had been drinking tea for 20 years with no such transformation in sight.



Everyone's grandmother too has been sipping tea for 40 years but that hasn't in every case led to spiritual awakening, has it? What's the difference between the student and the grandmother or teashop owner then? Wu De liked to taunt his audience with the question. I won't spoil the plot too much, but it has mainly to do with drinking living tea (vs. the deadened, tortured commercial variety). However, it is also about intent—basically, what we offer to the tea-drinking experience. Don't treat a hearth properly and get tepid heat; don't show ample respect for tea and teaware and guests and oneself, and get half a tea experience. Empty your cup, open your heart, send your ego on vacation, drink living tea and you're well on the way towards spiritual transformation.

This was one, and only one, of the lessons brought up during Wu De's recent visit. These were life lesson, not just tea lessons. That's why they can also be learned among sweating old guys in an obscure Estonian town or in trying to make a fire or in how you prepare tea. That's the essence of Dao—it seeps into everything, not just one aspect of life. During the seven seminars, workshops and drinking sessions we hosted here in Estonia, we likely spoke about tea per se no more than 35-

40% of the time. The rest of the time was... life. "If you want to make a proper cup of tea, you must first learn to be a proper human being."

Wu De's Scatters Seeds in Estonia

It's been a few weeks now since the seminars, time for some of the life lessons learned to sink into a deeper level of awareness. Time also for some of them to be lost and forgotten; some seeds thrown up graciously for all to benefit from have been ignored and let fall where they may by lack of focus, readiness or awareness. That's life. We tend to be so locked into our own habits—of thought, of doing, of being—that when introduced to new ideas or ways of being, initial insight and excitement eventually get relegated to the back, dusty shelves of blurred, inconsequential memories by very strong aspects of ourselves that resist or fear change... or simply do not know what to do with it.

Yet like with scattered seeds, some which do not immediately spring to life or die out might take root at some later point or in unexpected ways. I've seen examples of all of this following the seminars—within myself

14 and in others. Forgetting and continuing with long-held patterns only with a new illusion of change has been in evidence; we are, after all, habit-loving humans. Yet in so many instances the people who attended these sessions have been transformed in some subtle ways forever. Wu De and the seminars come up frequently in conversations every single day. Many tell me they are continuing bowl tea every morning; or that they think about peace and space differently; or that they've been inspired to clean up their living spaces; or inspired to be better parents to their children; or that they've tried to relate to tea, objects and others as more than just bodies...

For several weeks after the workshops, my staff walked around as if in a bubble, filled with a lightness of being and grace after having received an intense dose of Wu De Wisdom (WDW I believe is the official, copyright-protected acronym). I can say without exaggeration that for a number of persons who attended the workshops and drinking sessions, life will never be quite the same. In quiet moments over sensually steaming cups, or via electronically-bleeped emails, I heard about how some shift of consciousness occurred in the peace of those tea times, or in the words spoken during them. Many have told me that their mornings would now not be complete without three quiet bowls of tea. Most meaningful and most beautiful for me personally, however, I saw the faces—the softened, opened faces of those during the seminars listening, feeling, changing.

Indeed for me the single most wonderful aspect of having gone through the almost two weeks of seminars was seeing the faces of people who mean a lot to me shift. In their eyes reflected an opening towards and budding awareness of another way to live, or approach to life, a way which holds the promise of less mind noise, more connection with oneself, Nature and others—one which brings into bloom the true self outside the realm of what Eckhart Tolle would describe as the “Little Me”. All this with a little help from *Camelia sinensis*.

I received sms texts from guys who had tears in their eyes hours after a workshop, so touched and moved were they by the themes brought up during them; I received emails from others full of thanks, thoughts, feelings; I received heartfelt handshakes and deep looks into my eyes for having done my part to materialise those sessions.

My own tea sessions have taken on a deeper dimension and I am more comfortable with encouraging and dealing with silence in my tea guests. I am working on creating an altar in my living space to encourage the dominance of my higher self and minimize Monkey Brain Interference (hitherto MBI). I learned more about what aspects of the Self and No Self to cultivate in order to cultivate a space through which higher wisdom can be channelled.

Despite my serious tone right now I must also emphasize the fun we all had too. There were so, so many moments of laughter and silliness in and outside of the seminars. Laughter is an essential part of surrendering to one's higher self. So many mind-created blocks and defences fall off when one's head is thrown back in laughter; so many loving feelings emanate outward as the face transforms into a smile. More healing than words even, the laughs we all shared were perhaps the glue which sealed in our insights. If people could only hear some of our lurid jokes—yikes!—we might get some cancellations of the GTH (or a rapid increase in subscriptions from some quarters). Seriously, though, laughter is the grounding force which helps plant the sometimes too-lofty and ethereal ideals we strive for in becoming better human beings.

In short, what an intense and transformative period it was!



The Incomparable Triin



A Few Memorable Wu De Quotes

In no particular order, no special rhyme or reason... some selected phrases from those enchanted days which jump out from memory:

A little bit of Triin is now in the dog outside who smelled her.

What kind of tea do you expect to find if you drink it at the same time as watching the computer? The kind of tea that is drunk while watching a computer!

If you want to bring living tea into your life, you must make room for it. Then, show it respect and love and attention or it will leave...

Learn to relate to things and not just use them.

When we drink tea with one hand we have a tendency of forgetting the tea.

Did you know that tea is a sexual plant—not just us!

A lot of work from Nature went into making a tea tree.

What relation did the snake poop have on to this tea that we're drinking? This is a reminder of our interconnectedness.

When you drink tea that has destroyed the Earth, how can you have a proper relationship with that plant, or with the

Earth itself? You can't meditate and connect with Nature spirit while sipping tea that has destroyed the Earth.

The timeless sutras of tea are written by Nature and not man. There is no miscommunication here, as what has happened when human prophets' words get mistranslated.

How do you Facebook the Google?

In the morning, we are soft, we are filling up, just like Nature, so let's fill ourselves with goodness. Make our mornings the first note of our day's symphony, keeping in mind that the first note sets the tone for the entire symphony.

There is no separation of anything. As if one cell from your hand could suddenly revolt and say that it no longer wishes to play the hand game! Change one element in your surroundings and you change everything...

Gongfu tea teaches sensitivity, bowl tea equanimity.

Growth should come from a sense of spiritual advancement and betterment, not from a desire for convenience, expediency or pleasure.

The purest form of Love has no object or form.

FINALLY!!

THE NEWS YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

As many of you know, our center here in Taiwan is an amazing place with three tea rooms. It is a magical building, filled with the light of hundreds of visitors, tea and food, smiles and good memories. It is, however, small for the traffic we are already receiving, and it looks like so many more of you are planning to come in the next year. It's hard to top the good news of far away friends coming for tea, but we think we can right now: this month a good friend and supporter of Tea Sage Hut donated around three acres for us to build a permanent center!

We are so excited to announce that we are halfway there. As all of you know, it has long been our dream to build a center that would outlive us all—we wrote about it in previous issues of this newsletter. It is amazing to see the universe responding to our dreams, and to watch them take form. We envision our center as a home for all of us. You are all welcome, ever and always, just as you have been to this our smaller (though still lovely) center in Miao Li. We see a bustling place with plenty of room for visitors, annual ten-day gatherings where all the members of this Hut can meet up for some good food,

tea and fellowship. Wouldn't it be great to meet the many brothers and sisters sharing this tea with you in person?

The land is just outside the town of Da Hu, Miao Li county, in the mountains. Unbelievably, it has a waterfall, a river with clean drinking water, cliffs and fertile land for growing vegetables and tea. That's right, we hope to have a thriving tea farm within five or ten years! Maybe one month of each year's Global Tea Hut will be tea we've grown and processed ourselves. It is our aim to create a fully sustainable community, using green and eco-friendly building materials, solar electricity and hot water, as many dry toilets as possible, organic ecological and arbor tea, a vegetable garden capable of sustaining most if not all our foodstuffs and of course Earth-centered, spiritually-minded human beings to maintain it all. We hope to be almost completely self-sufficient and act as a paragon for other sustainable communities in Taiwan and throughout the world.

Originally, we had dreamed of a more accessible center somewhere just outside the city, but our vision has changed in the last year to include a tea farm. We take many of our visitors to produce their own tea while here anyway. It will be nice for you to be able to interact



*Part of our waterfall*

with center trees, which we aim to grow ecologically with room between each tree as they grow deep roots and tall crowns—true living tea, as we have so often discussed in these newsletters. The area is bathed in morning mists every day, has its own river with mineral-rich soil, rocks and cliffs and vibrant green all around. There is a vast array of plant and animal life, ensuring fertility. Also, there is little else around—the air, land and water are all pollution-free. It is a fine place to grow some tea, which means it's also a nice place to meditate, calm down and drink some tea in quiet.

We plan to start with four buildings. The main hall will house tea rooms, Zen gardens, koi ponds, storage for tea as well as the kitchens and dinning halls. We plan to build it out of stones quarried from the land itself. This will make the building strong and long-lasting. We hope to decorate in a Japanese style, with flying roofs, using antique wood, tatamis and simple décor throughout. Then, there will be three guest houses to start. Each will include four beds, a private bathroom and closets. We hope to use a lot of bamboo in the construction of these,

as there is a huge bamboo grove on the property. Bamboo can last up to five years before repairs are needed, and we will therefore have a constant supply. This is a cheap and environmentally friendly way to build our guest houses. Finally, we will build a meditation hall on the terrace near the waterfall. It, too, will be built in a Japanese style.

We also visualize a fully landscaped center with Zen stone gardens, flowers, and gorgeous trees. The tea will be grown on three or four stone terraces, and we also have a sizeable area for growing vegetables. With a bit of landscaping, you will be able to see the waterfall from anywhere on the property. It will be a place of solace and serenity, with plenty of opportunity to get close to the Earth as well.



Construction

While receiving the land is a tremendous gift, we are only halfway to our goal. We still need to raise the money to build. We think that it will take between 300 and 500,000 USD including all landscaping and decorations. We can do this in stages or all at once, depending on how much we are able to raise. We pray that others will contribute with an understanding that this is to be a home for all tea lovers—the world's only free tea school/center devoted to Cha Dao.

We see three potential avenues for fundraising: firstly, we are creating a self-sufficient, sustainable community and hope that economically-minded donors and/or environmental concerns are willing to support us as such; second, we are creating a tea school/center with free classes from several tea masters happening year round. All classes, room and board and expenses will be completely free. For that reason, we hope that many tea lovers around the world will be interested in participating in this monumental project. Finally, our center will be a place of meditation, Zen. We hope that meditators seeking a place to do spiritual work freely will be interested in contributing. When we speak of Zen, or Ch'an, we are not referring to any organized religion. On the contrary, we hope to create a completely free spiritual center where you can come and practice in any way you see fit, as long as it does not disturb the order of the center. All forms of meditation are welcome. We intend to provide meditative space, food and lodging that you can use in your own way.

If any of you would like to make a donation to our project or have any insights as to how we can raise

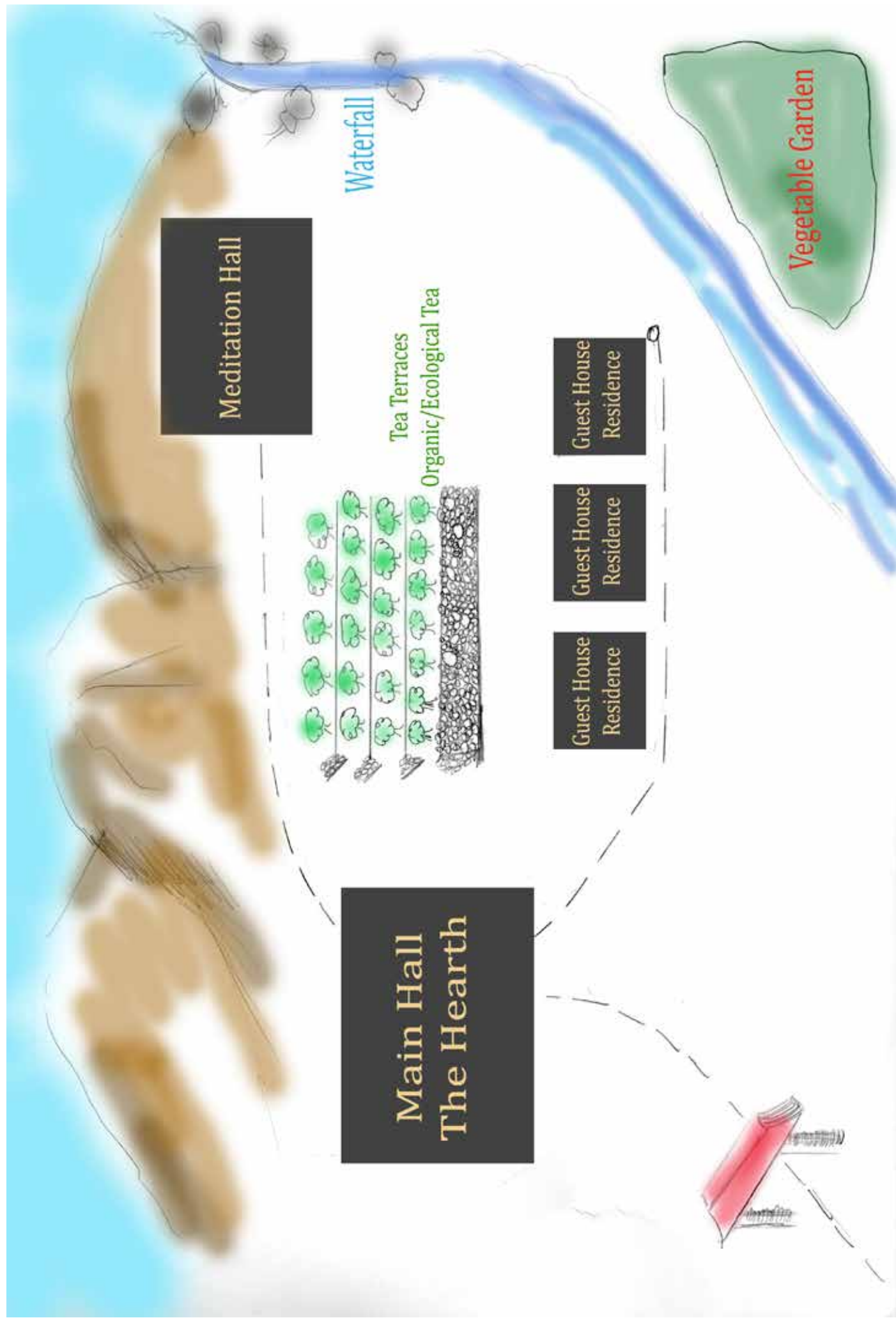
these funds and reach our goals, please contact us. There will be a page up for center donations on the Global Tea Hut website (www.globalteahut.org) and we will be putting up a video shot at the site soon. We will be updating you in all the following issues of these newsletters, so you will know how things are progressing. It has been raining a lot lately in Miao Li, so we don't have many good photos of the land to show you yet, but they will be forthcoming, both in future newsletters and on the website. In the meantime, these will have to do...

This is an exciting holiday season, indeed!

Finally, before we forget, we'd like to share the name of our future center with you: **Light Meets Life** (光壽無量)*.

**The Chinese is actually deeper, literally translating "Light Meets Life and Becomes Infinity."*





BIODYNAMIC TEA AT NEW MOON FARM

Article by Shane Marrs

Lunar planting has long been practiced within the realm of agriculture. Planting by the cycles and rhythms of the moon is simple, tangible, and connecting. The influences can easily be seen in animals, plants, and soil. These effects remind us of the interplay between the cosmic and the terrestrial. They highlight the beauty and splendor of the relationship between Earth and Moon. They call to our attention that Nature is Great.

It's not difficult to extend this notion of cosmic relationships beyond the moon to that of the sun, with its obvious gifts of warmth and light. To consider other planetary relationships with the Earth and zodiac constellations might also be entertained by the open mind. If we take this one step further and focus our attention on agriculture in light of all of these factors, we begin to enter the realm of Biodynamics, which is the farming practice employed at Finca Luna Nueva (New Moon Farm) in Costa Rica.

Finca Luna Nueva is a sustainable rainforest eco-lodge and biodynamic farm. The farms' 220 plus acres of tropical rainforest is host to a wellspring of biological diversity. Being so close to the equator, one cannot help but notice the dense humidity, abundant rain, verdant richness, and dramatic cycles of life and decomposition. In the tropics, everything is bigger, faster, more colorful, and in greater company. It is a palpable environment for plants and animals to simply abound.

To pay tribute to such grand biodiversity, Finca Luna Nueva created a Living Seed Sanctuary; 'living' in a literal sense, and also in relation to the 'living' quality found in the tradition of Cha Dao. Imagine not some chilled seed bank in a snowy mountain cave, but a dynamic collection of over 300 medicinal plants representing and protecting both tropical and cultural biodiversity. Considering that many cultures rely on plants as medicine, it's no surprise that within this Sacred Seed Sanctuary we find the tea plant: *Camellia sinensis*.





I went to Finca Luna Nueva on a three-month internship to focus on Tea and Biodynamics—very uncharted territory in Central America. Coffee is king in Costa Rica, and Biodynamics is only just blooming beyond its once esoteric confinement. First, let us consider this elegant portrayal of Biodynamics:

“Bio-dynamics, though not disparaging of common sense, is concerned essentially with consciousness-expansion in regard to plants, animals and soil. The attempt is made to look into the deeper spirit of Nature. Out of this deeper awareness, based on exquisite observation of Nature, the approach calls for not letting things run their natural course, but for intensifying certain natural processes (creating optimal animal populations, making special compost preparations, planting selected companion plants at certain cosmic constellations), aiding Nature where She is weak after so many centuries of abuse, short-cutting destructive processes, and instead using human intelligence, kindness and good will to foster positive developments.”

—*Culture and Horticulture*—

Demeter certified Biodynamic Ginger and Turmeric are the two commercial crops at Finca Luna Nueva. Besides the Sacred Seed Sanctuary, there is

also a hardy cacao grove, an abundance of fruit trees, a thriving vegetable and herb garden, and a very small tea garden consisting of about eighty tea plants, of which roughly fifty are harvest-ready. There are some very special qualities about this small tea garden: The original *Assamica*-variety seeds were planted in 1997. They were essentially let to grow untended into trees, which the large-leaf variety naturally does. In the heat of the tropics, accompanied by ample rainfall, each seed burst forth into its own genetic uniqueness. This alone is a distinguishing factor from most tea plantations today where cuttings are the propagation method of choice. Cuttings hold true to their mother plant, genetically speaking, which may possess certain desirable qualities such as high crop yield, uniformity, pest resistance, adaptability to climate, and other such economic-driven factors.

In many cases, the crown of a plant or tree reflects that of its root system. When tea plants are pruned to a manageable height for harvest and maintenance, their root structure reflects that through shallow growth. As trees grow towards the light, their roots grow down into the depths of the soil where energy, minerals, nutrients, and abundant resources reside. At Finca Luna Nueva the plants were eventually cut back

22 to create a plucking table. Not all of the trees were cut back, however; three were let to stand, ranging between twenty and forty feet tall. These are the trees from which they harvest seeds for further propagation. Seeds that not only contain genetic variance, but the genetic quality inherited from mother trees whose root systems reflect fifteen years of unhampered crown growth. That is poetically and literally deep.

Besides all of that grandeur, the tea gardens, along with the rest of the farm, thrive off the energy of Biodynamic farming practices. The term 'Bio-dynamic' derives from the two Greek words, 'bios' (life) and 'dynamis' (energy). Everything from planting, weeding, and harvesting, to pruning, processing, and tending can be considered in the light of Biodynamics. Whether we're harvesting near the new moon, spraying compost preparations by the alignment of Earth and Saturn, or germinating seeds near the full moon, life energies are at play. This is an organic, sustainable, and spiritual approach to raising tea.

During my time at the farm, over two hundred baby tea plants were transplanted into two beautiful gardens, and another couple hundred seeds are currently being germinated. From the harvest-ready plants, we tried our hand at processing red tea, and with such high-quality raw material, it was tough to go wrong! Without any reference for processing tea in Central America, we had fun experimenting with all the factors involved such as withering, rolling, oxidizing, and

drying, not to mention harvesting by different cycles of the moon as it passed through different zodiac constellations. We thoroughly enjoyed our small-batch, hand-rolled tea, as did our farm guests during a Biodynamic Red Tea Workshop I gave to conclude my internship. The founder of Biodynamics understood the important role that water has to play in carrying and transmitting energies. Very precise uses of water are specified when preparing certain compost-sprays. Special stirring of rainwater introduces cosmic forces that enable the water to become a dynamic carrier of the life energy associated with a particular compost preparation. This may sound strange if you are not familiar with Biodynamics (and probably strange even if you are), but it means nothing more than this: water is sensitive and very responsive to external stimuli. Its function and structure can be altered by human attention and consciousness. If that still doesn't sit well with you, then let us also allow room for the mystery inherent in any tradition: spiritual, agricultural, or otherwise.

In the end, the underlying concern of Biodynamics lies in creating healthy living soil. As water is to tea, soil is to the tea plant. If the water is clean and pure, tea can express itself without any resistance. If soil is healthy and alive, plants will be nutritious and hardy. One need not force a good bowl of tea or try to grow healthy plants, you just need good water and soil. Accordingly, Nature will take care of the rest.



Do you think it possible to dissect a human being, render it down into its constituent parts, feed them into a machine which measures such things and determine from that its ability to paint or create great music? No? Then why do you think that once you have done this with my body you know anything about me?

-Tea



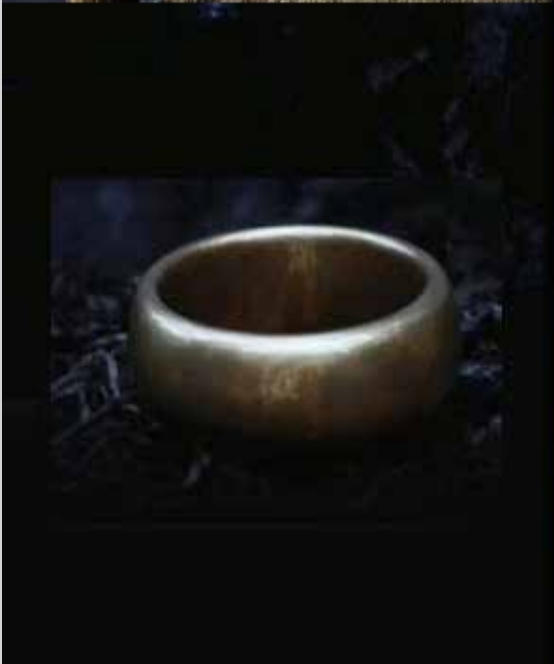
When you begin down an Eastern path, and Cha Dao mostly heads East, you quickly realize the important role language can play in our thinking, and consequently our insights. For the most part, we come to love the ancient spiritual words in languages like Sanskrit and Chinese—for their subtlety and breadth. There is one English word we’ve come to like better than its Eastern equivalents, however: “Enlightenment”. When most people think of “Enlightenment” they see in the word the “light” and are reminded of the light in us, which we all travel towards. But “light” in English has another meaning: not heavy! Being enlightened means, literally, lightening up! Don’t take yourself serious, or anything else for that matter. There is an old Indian saying: “beware the spiritual/religious man that takes himself seriously!” And many of you know how we here do so love laughter and humor. We thought that these newsletters might be getting a bit heavy and that we would en-lighten them up.

As many of you know, we are huge Tolkien fans here at the center. The release of the Hobbit fulfilled two of our loves: film and Middle Earth. As a result, we thought we would show you a couple movie posters to promote the film. These posters are all throughout Taiwan—on telephone poles, old houses, along the highway and even in public bathrooms. We have already seen the movie once and plan to go again. It was great!



THE HOBBIT

AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY



From now on, we plan to introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you each month 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. We thought we'd introduce you to the incredible Nick Dilks.

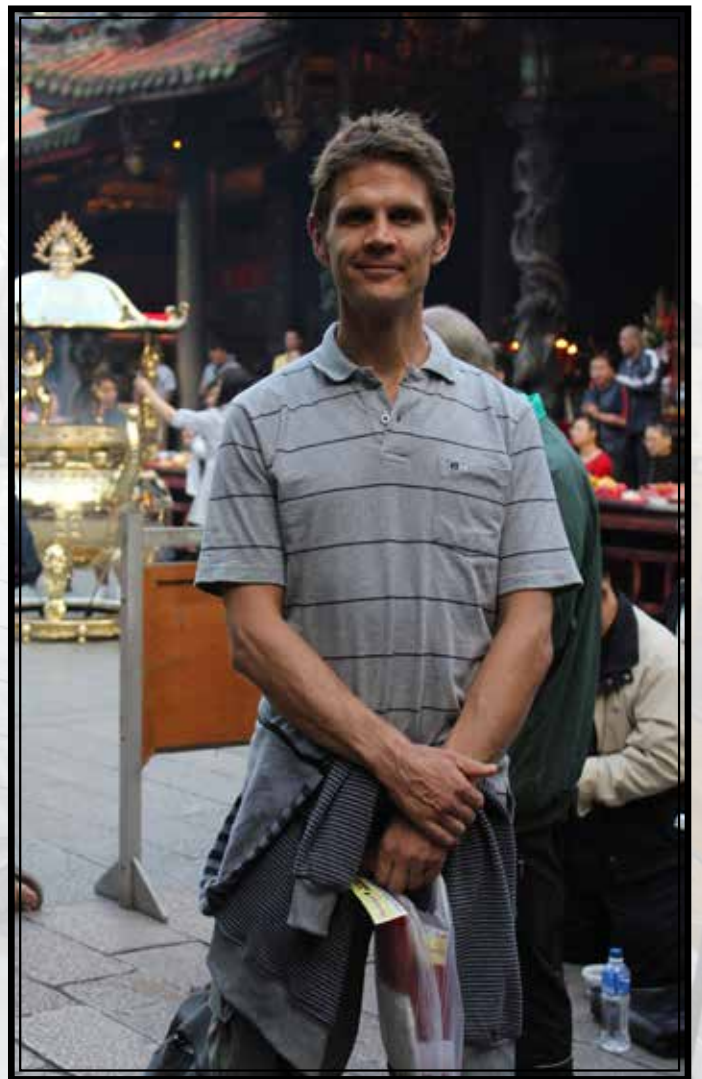
I am fairly new to tea having been introduced to Oolong by my good friend, San Bao, who runs the tea ceremonies at the health spa we both work for in Koh Samui, Thailand. That was about two years ago. Before that, I had been put off tea as a young kid who was forced to drink milky 'builders' tea by my Dad at mealtimes! Later in life I got into Buddhism, particularly connecting with Zen, and was surrounded by inspiring stories of monks sipping tea in the mountain peaks... I desperately wanted to like tea, and even had a friend who did Oolong tea ceremonies, but found myself the lone Buddhist at our center who didn't drink tea. . .

However, two years ago I sat at San Bao's tea ceremony determined to give it another try and a lovely Kwan Yin Oolong tea was placed before me. I drank it and, lo and behold, I loved it! I immediately bought a starter kit: a tray, some cups and a couple of tea pots, and I've never looked back. I started to give other teas a try and found something miraculous happen: though I rarely liked them at first, maybe after ten brews some started to taste great. Perhaps this was my palate slowly given up my association of tea with my Dad!

San Bao has been very helpful all the way, sharing his passion with characteristic big heart. He also introduced me to Wu De by way of Wu De's first book and the old *Art of Tea* magazines. He also told me about Global Tea Hut.

In December I had the good fortune to visit Taiwan with San Bao and his partner, Gila, and had the opportunity to visit the Tea Sage Hut community. We had such a great time, and I would recommend that you all get there if you can. I love receiving my tea package from the gang every month. It is lovely to think of you all around the world, and because I am so new to tea, each month so far has been a new type of tea for me.

Normally, when I get into something I go mad reading books and trying to find out as much as I can about it. But with tea something different is happening: I am just enjoying whatever comes my way . . . and rather than seeking to master the subject of tea, I am waiting to see what the master, the Leaf, has planned for me!



The Global Tea Hut website now has a forum up, where we can all discuss this month's tea and ask or answer questions, as well as share our experiences. It is a great way to meet some of your brothers and sisters in the hut. Come and join us:

www.globalteahut.org/forum

(We are also on Facebook and Twitter now!)



We have launched the new video series! The first video is an introduction to this Global Tea Hut. The second is about bowl tea. The third is about Mr. Xie. You can visit our Youtube channel via the GTH website or watch the video on the new page at our site. We will be launching regular videos starting in August, with tutorials, interviews, introductions and much more about this love of the Leaf!



There are currently more than 116 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world: countries like Spain, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. Our accountant, Kaiya the Magnificent (and Merciful) says that once we get to around 120 people all our financial worries will vanish and we'll live happily everafter, forever and ever... Membership will be limited to 200ish members!



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in color, you can read them on the Internet at the GTH website, under the link for 'newsletters'. Some of the photography is worth taking a peak at.



You are all welcome to visit our center in Taiwan. All classes, as well as room and board are completely free of charge. We have tons going on. You can read more at:

www.teasagehut.org

We weren't able to send the envelopes without having them registered. This is because the post office informed us that they will be mishandled that way. If your envelope is returned to us, we will send it back. If it gets lost, please let us know. Try to choose an address where someone is sure to be home during the day to sign for it. Also, remember to pick it up from the post office.



We have given out 5 scholarships for a free year of GTH to people who want in but cannot afford the cost. If you know anyone else interested, please let us know. It is a great joy to expand this community!



If any of you have any ideas about how we can raise the funds to build our new center or would like to make a donation yourself, please contact us through any of our websites.



Let us know about what you think of Global Tea Hut so far, either by contacting us or expressing your thoughts on the new forum. We would love to hear your comments or criticism. We are here to serve and make this experience better for everyone, bringing us all closer together.

www.globalteahut.org

www.teasagehut.org

www.the-leaf.org

Be happy!



TEA SAGE HUT PROJECTS

Our center

- Expenses (essentially covered by local donations and Global Tea Hut)
- Food and entertainment, trips and gas for visitors who wish to see Taiwan
- Bowls and tea for every guest to take home
- A Puerh Cave on the third floor
- A library of vintage teas for future students to study from
- A Large collection of various teawares to learn from

Future Center

- ~~Mountain land (We got it! Check this one off)~~
- Building (We will need from between 300 and 500,000 USD)
- Gardening (both landscaping and vegetables for eating)

Publications

- *The Leaf, Tea & Tao Magazine* (Online and free at: www.the-leaf.org)
- Translations of some Chinese texts for free distribution
- Printing of pamphlets and introductions for free distribution
- The purchase of copies of Wu De's books: *Faces of the Master*, *Tea Wisdom*, *Way of Tea* and *Zen & Tea, One Flavor* for free distribution at our center

Videos

- We still need around 500 USD worth of equipment
- We are also looking for a way to better host/share the videos