



Global Tea Hut

NEWSLETTER #15, APRIL 2013

April is a very important time for the tea world. It is the third lunar cycle of the calendar, called the Peach Moon, and the beginning of Spring. In ancient China, Spring officially began when the emperor sipped the first cup of the first flush of green tea. The rarest green teas flush before the Clear Bright Festival (*Qing Ming Jie*) at the beginning of the month, called “Ming Qian.” During Clear Bright the tea flushes more vigorously and is called “Qing Ming.” After the festival, from around April twentieth to May sixth, the tea flushes several more times. These flushes are called “Gu Yu.” All Spring tea after that is demarked as “Li Xia.” Generally, these four flushes are successively inferior. And it was the first, *Ming Qian* (Pre-Clear Bright), tea that marked the start of Spring.

Just before Clear Bright Festival the rarest and most premium teas were given to the emperor in tribute and he ceremonially distributed them to his supporters after having tried each one and choosing the best. His first sip was heralded throughout the Middle Kingdom—usually around the equinox—and soon followed by the Clear Bright Festival. One of the greatest of all emperors, and an enthusiastic tea lover, Qian Long said that “the country cannot go a day without its emperor, and the emperor cannot go a day without his tea,” demonstrating the reverence Chinese held for tea and its role in the very governance of the empire.

Traditionally, the Clear Bright Festival (*Qing Ming Jie*) lasted for fifteen days, but these days it is a two-day holiday (April 4-5). The name is said to come from the weather at this time, just before the rains. It is a time for paying respect to those who have passed. Chinese people are traditionally cremated and their ashes put into urns which are kept in a family tomb. Clear Bright is a time for visiting the tomb, cleaning and placing new flowers and prayers. The young and old alike visit the tombs and discuss those who have left, which is why the holiday is sometimes called “Tomb-sweeping Festival.” This is typically followed by a family meal at the gravesite and rice bowls with chopsticks balanced on them are placed before each ancestor and some families even serve them their favorite food

and drink in life. Prayers include ghost money burning, incense, tea, flowers and candy. The ghost money is to use in the afterlife and for their wellbeing. Finally, people bow three times to their ancestors in respect before departing.

People of all cultures have ways of remembering those who have passed and/or tending graves. The blood of our families still runs in us, and the memories of those who have passed live on in our hearts. We have been formed by our past, and without it we wouldn't be who or where we are. We didn't arise from nowhere, and reminiscence needn't be a reminder to grieve, but rather a celebration of our roots.

Use this month of April to reflect on all the collective experience of those who have come before us, and how we should learn from their wisdom and folly. Also, take time to honor and respect your own ancestors. In our center, we clean a lot during Clear Bright Festival: changing and wiping the altars, putting out new flowers and dusting in all the corners we've neglected in our weekly cleanings. Perhaps you could set out a bowl or cup of this month's special tea for all your ancestors who no longer walk the earth. It doesn't matter what your beliefs about the afterlife are; you can still pay respect to the memory and love that lives on in your heart.

The Peach Moon is also a great time to buy some fresh tea and clean out your tea space. You can take out all the jars and dust behind them, check on the Puerh you are aging and open a window to let in some fresh air. We scour new pots, order this year's tea and start drinking lighter teas after Clear Bright Festival, after one last sessions of amazing dark tea to say goodbye to the darker teas of autumn and winter, which is why we choose one last dark tea for you this month—before the green season sets in and the flowers bloom...

*So draw a cup from out this endless stream,
and contemplate the tall mountains
and winding rivers.*

WHO WE ARE

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, cultivating and expressing an awakening of harmony through tea. We believe that tea wisdom which has no connection to any financial motivation, good or bad, is very necessary in this modern world and therefore strive to build schools, centers and other tea spaces in the true, ancient spirit of tea—leaves, water and wisdom shared without any personal profit. There are several facets of what we do. Below are our main and current projects, branching from our roots outward:

Global Tea Hut

Global Tea Hut is one of our main sources of income, helping to support all of our projects. Members around the world donate money and then tea farmers, merchants or tea lovers donate tea. We connect the two gift-givers. For a minimum donation of twenty dollars a month, members receive a special tea, a newsletter and a gift. All the work involved is voluntary and the tea is donated, keeping expenses to a minimum. We have found that this Global Tea Hut connects tea lovers around the world, and that if you share in the tea with a desire to connect, you will clearly feel the community in the bowl. In joining Global Tea Hut, you can help support all our projects, drink a unique living tea each month, be a part of this community, read about the teas, this tradition and a life of tea and stay connected to our energy and activities here and abroad. For more information visit: www.globalteahut.org

The Leaf

Our free, online magazine about tea hasn't had a new issue in over a year, but it will be restarted very soon with an all-new ninth issue. *The Leaf* focuses more on tea information, differentiating it from these more casual/personal GTH newsletters. It is currently electronic only, though we offer free hard copies to the visually impaired. For more information visit: www.the-leaf.org

Tea Sage Hut

This is our current center, located in Miao Li, Taiwan. Each year, we host over one hundred visitors from all around the world. At the Tea Sage Hut, guests come and drink tea, eat vegetarian food and have a bed should they need it. We have weekly tea classes and daily meditation sessions each morning and evening. We also help coordinate travel around Taiwan and put guests in touch with tea farmers, tea and teaware shops and events. All instruction, room and board, and hugs are free. We operate on a donation basis, and guests are free to leave as much or as little as they like for future guests, knowing that their visit was supported by past guests and hoping to pay the experience forward. For more information visit: www.teasagehut.org

Light Meets Life

In December, we were donated three acres of gorgeous land in the mountains of Da Hu, Taiwan. The land has a waterfall, sakura trees, cliffs, views and abundant verdure. Light Meets Life will be the name of our future, expanded center. It will be a great place to learn about and drink tea as well as to meditate. We plan to have an ecological, organic tea garden for educational purposes and a communal farm to grow our own food. Our new center will be run on similar principals to that of the Tea Sage Hut, only on a larger scale. For more information visit the Global Tea Hut website and click on the 'Our Center' link at the top of the page.

YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, APRIL 2013

Spring 2000 Gong Ting Shou Puerh, Yunnan, China

For the most part, we drink tea according to the seasons, harmonizing our bodies with Nature. We should live, eat and exercise this way as well. There are exceptions based on where you live, under which stars and what kind of weather. Here in Taiwan, we typically drink a lot of roasted and/or aged oolong in the autumn, then Shou and aged Sheng Puerh in the winter. When spring comes we shift to younger Sheng Puerhs and move lighter towards green teas in the summer. However, there are always chances for a visit from a winter friend in the summer, or vice versa.

Living in harmony with Nature means recognizing Her cycles and harmonizing with them, in every way. If people in the world ate seasonally and locally, as our ancestors did, we would all be healthier and the world would be happier and less environmentally strained. A big part of this life of tea, is found in connecting to Nature. In these leaves there is mountain, water and wind. We drink the weather, for the seasons—rain or drought, cold or warm—all change the tea. And these leaves aren't just connected to the earth, they are also channeling the sun, stars and moon through the light they live on. We also have a place in this magical dance of connection. A Zen master said that if you look carefully at this page, you'll see a cloud drift by: for without clouds there's no rain and without rain no trees to make paper from. Beyond that, there is the author and my ancestors—all of which were necessary to get us here. And then beyond that the food they all ate, the water they drank and the air they breathed: connecting us all in a huge web of life.

Every spring here in Taiwan there is always a gasp of winter that comes with the spring rains. It is warm in March and the beginning of April, and everyone feels spring is here. Then, the rains come on cold fronts and a few final hints of winter resurface one last time before warm spring weather really sets in. We have always found this last few weeks of cool weather the perfect time to say goodbye to the darker black, Shou or aged Sheng Puerhs we have been drinking throughout the winter. These teas will go into retreat now, awaiting next winter when they will come out to warm us once more. And so, in these cool weeks of spring rain, we find ourselves stoking a brighter brazier and parting from our friends with a final hug before turning towards greener fields and teas...

We thought you would all like to join us in saying goodbye to Shou Puerh with one last great tea: a 2000 Gong Ting Shou Puerh. The words "Gong Ting" mean "Imperial Court", in reference to the exceptional quality of this Puerh tea, which is made exclusively of young golden buds. Typically this quality of Puerh was reserved for tribute to the court. Of course, in those days there wasn't any of the artificial fermentation that characterizes Shou Puerh, but the best buds were still selected by hand for the emperor's bowl.

As we have mentioned in previous newsletters, Shou tea is a newer genre of Puerh. All traditional Puerh, and the greater volume of what is made today, is Sheng. In the sixties and early seventies, the factories were looking for a way to speed up the long fermentation process of Sheng Puerh, which can take decades. They studied the artificial fermentation processes of Black teas like Liu Bao and adapted them to Puerh. Obviously, they weren't able to recreate the magic of naturally aging Sheng Puerh for decades, but they did create a unique and new genre of tea.

Shou Puerh is moistly piled and covered in a thermal blanket post-production, speeding up fermentation. Traditionally, (from the 70's to the 90's) all Puerh was cheaper and so better quality leaves were more often used to produce Shou tea, though a lot of cheap, low quality Shou was still exported to Mongolia and Tibet. Also, the piling process (called "wo dui") was done more skillfully and to a lesser degree so the tea could still age a bit over time. Nowadays, most Shou is processed using inferior leaves because the price of Shou tea is so much lower than Sheng and the raw tea from the trees (*mao cha*) is too expensive. Furthermore, a lot of modern Shou is over-fermented so it won't really age, just mellow out over time.

Tea of the Month

This month's tea is a special trend that began in the 1980s of using only the small, golden buds of plantation Puerh to produce Shou Puerh. Picking such small buds from the large, old-growth teas wouldn't be possible in the quantities necessary to produce this tea. Unfortunately, most of the plantations in Yunnan have more recently switched to inorganic production methods. However, our tea is from the year 2000 and is definitely clean and organic. The very smallest and

Tea of the Month

freshest buds were picked by hand for this tea. It takes thousands of them to make a kilogram of tea. They were then withered, de-enzymed (fried), rolled and sun dried. At that point, they were rehydrated and piled (*wo dui*) to make a dark Shou tea. This all-bud tea needs to be piled in smaller, more carefully managed piles than the larger, lower quality leaves that are usually used to make Shou tea.

The liquor of this tea is thick, creamy and sweet. The buds are rich and tender, realizing a ton of essence into the bowl. You will probably need a pot to prepare them, as they are small for bowl tea. You will find the tea very Yang and warming, good in the morning for waking up to a brisk, cool and clean spring morning. The dark depths of your bowl or cup will be a farewell to the darkness of winter, as we all turn towards warmer weather and lighter teas. Though this tea is warm and

sweet, you will probably find yourself pretty quiet after a bowl or two; and if you are with loved ones or friends, you'll find that you all slip into a warm and calm silence. We also will meet you there, transforming together and from around the world...

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.







INTO THE LIGHT

Article by Steve “the Spaz” Kokker

There's a part of our brain which I like to refer to as the moth-brain. We are all overly-familiar with our monkey brains and how they take us over on a regular basis, but the part of our skull-housed ruler which seems to be a leftover from our ancient moth ancestors also plays its part in determining our behavior: That's the part that controls our propensity towards getting distracted by that which shines brightly; by that which glitters, twitters, sparkles, sputters; by the dazzling, the beautiful, the unexpected; by that which captures the attention suddenly and stimulates some atavistic sense of longing, desire or wonder.

It's worth taking a little self-look to check whether or not we are flying on automatic pilot head-long into pretty and cool things only to fall down in shock when they turn out to be illusory or painful... and then get up and fly straight-on to the next one. This theme is relevant to us tea lovers who are on a spiritual path within the tea world as our deepening tea and meditative experiences often lead to some dizzyingly blissful moments which can sometimes blindside us to what's real and true just as often as they can also lead us towards a deeper truth. Many who undertake a spiritual path of 'self improvement' have flashes of deep calm, or glitches of enlightenment or feelings of rootedness, balance or synchronicity—not to mention astral travel, tantric kriyas and weird tingling sensations in forgotten corners of the body. They're awesome, they're game-changers, but are they that which we seek?

Wu De's recent recounting of the tale of the great master who didn't flinch when his rascally students organized a fake ambush with gun fire and chaos also reminds us of the depths possible when we do not immediately get distracted and attracted by all of what glitters and sputters around us. It's difficult enough to train ourselves to remain balanced when faced with external temptations, but what about our attitude towards inner states which are just as seductive?

The Fireworks of Enlightenment

This theme is on my overly analytical mind lately because as I've been slipping deeper into explorations of heightened sensitivity over the last few years, I have also been experiencing more and more of what I call spiritual pyrotechnics. They've come and gone

since adolescence but have never been quite as frequent and intense as they are now that I'm placing more and more focus on them. I feel that part of me wants to make more of them than they warrant. They have for me come in the form of strongly energetic happenings brought on either by deep moments of connection with and through tea, by Vipassana or other forms of meditation, via dabbling in sexual kung fu and tantric massage (but we'll need to wait for the Uncut version of the GTH Newsletter for more details), and during moments of rare stillness.

These transcendent moments are what keep many practitioners of any kind of technique going; it is not unusual during stillness and calm to have experiences of a deep, sinking peace; or to experience a flood of seemingly meaningful images; or to sense a tingling flow of electrical currents racing under the skin's surface; or even to have full-body kriyas. At first, they seem to have an almost supernatural, psychic, esoteric or other-worldly aspect to them but that's only because we have spent so long so disconnected from our true nature. Ultimately, they may be little more than bright flashing lights; pretty, energetic neurons firing in the darkness of consciousness, surface disturbances reflecting deeper re-alignments, etc.

That's all. And yet, that's also quite a bit.

Why then do we sometimes get stuck to them, as if they themselves are enlightenment, the spiritual growth we seek? Like with everything, the answers are myriad. We can likely speak of dopamine rushes and the brain's instant tendency to form habits; or maybe these experiences are just cool. Maybe it's also just laziness or ignorance (it's way easier to create pyrotechnics than to plunge through them and live every moment fueled by one's higher self). And of course, fear likely also plays a role here: fear of not being able to go the distance and be *spiritual enough*. It's so comfortable to stay within the realm of the senses, albeit heightened ones.

It's even easier to get carried away in these surface effects as it is to create them. We can fill our ears with perspective-altering words by Terrence McKenna, put on some Carbon Based Lifeforms, take a few whiffs of palo santo or aloeswood and sit in Buddha pose while sipping the nectar of ancient tea leaves in a finely cracked bowl and without too much effort experience brief moments of virtual levitation: head spins, muscles

spasm, images from the past surface, inner tensions dissipate. Pretty darn close to bliss.

Nothing wrong with a bit of bliss, mind you, and this does allow us to connect with deeper aspects of the self than we are normally in touch with. They show us the way; they whisper, "Hey, look what's possible! This is what you have cut yourself off from!" And yet, to borrow an oft-used metaphor, the finger pointing to the moon is not the moon, no matter how much it might tingle, vibrate or generate beams of white, healing Qi.

Although I've been drawn to and attracted by these heady moments since my teens, there is a growing sense that I need to really pay attention to something much more still and subtle residing under their surface. Just as getting overly excited at the taste of tea keeps me on the surface of tea's nature, no matter how gorgeous and delicious it might be, so too does generating these transcendent feelings/sensations keep me from taking a final leap into *being* those things.

Living It

So what am I proposing with these musings? I am much better at pointing things out than offering precise steps on how to remedy them. I can sense that these bright lights and bumping into them are not the same as generating that same light, but I'm afraid I cannot, at least by this newsletter's deadline, come up with an easy answer about how to do so. Without such energetic pyrotechnics we would surely have a less clear understanding of where we want to go and what we're capable of. So let's continue breathing in red light into our heart chakras to the beat of Harold Budd and releasing deeply stored emotional issues from our muscle tissues during holotropic breathing twist and shout sessions. Let's close our eyes drinking ancient Wu Liang Mountain leaves and be visited by wizened old tea sages who step into our minds and impart very relevant words. Let's savor the bliss when rigid mental structures instantly dissolve during a spiritual experience or with a

little help from a friendly substance. That's funky, that's groovy, that's helpful.

Yet let's do so with an added layer of awareness that focusing too much on what are ultimately very normal phenomena might in some cases keep us hooked on achieving them, or distract us from accessing something deeper but less flashy. After all, these bright lights do eventually sputter out (like as soon as you drive home from the rebirthing centre and the first jerk cuts you off, or when you see twelve missed calls as you're still wiping the Moksha Yoga-induced sweat from your brow).

Ideally, I don't want to keep bumping into the bright lights to get stunned, fall back into the dirt and start all over again. That would also be living on automatic, even though it appears to be a more deluxe version of it. Ideally, I want to be that light all the time, radiate it to warm others, incorporating it into everyday big city life with all its challenges; both feet firmly on the ground but wings stretching into eternity.

Of course, Eckhart Tolle among many others would say that there is no need to learn yet another technique on *how* to avoid getting stuck on pyrotechnics. There's not necessarily a *way* to do this. Thinking that we need to get beyond them to another level just creates more distance to travel, more goals to achieve and Things To Do to achieve them. Why not just go for it all right here and now? No need then to seek or reject those cool experiences. I can just observe them when they appear, heed their messages if there are any and try to live the lessons they teach. No time like the present. So instead of eagerly awaiting the next head rush, I'll step out the front door, and with the clarity those dazzling lights have shown me do my best to just... be.





YOU ARE THE LIGHT

Article by Shane Marrs

We often talk about making decisions based on movement towards the light, movement stemming from a mind unclouded and a heart unveiled, movement with an embracing momentum of Love and Gratitude, Skill and Honesty. These are aspects of the first Bowl in *The Eight Bowls of a Life of Tea: Skillful Means; Moral Uprightness*. This type of skill is easier discussed than cultivated; on the surface level there is a paradox at play. If I am to move towards the light, how am I to do this without first distinguishing between what is light and dark (in terms of good and bad)? In a relative sense, there is always something good and always something bad to be perceived in any situation. Perception is everything in this realm. Even plants, which grow naturally towards the light, tap roots towards the dark depths of the Earth.

I want to move towards the light and *not* away from the dark, but that in itself *is* moving away from the fear of moving away. Having aversion towards aversion is no remedy for aversion. Everything has its place. There's nothing to resist. That which you resist only persists. So how to avoid getting tripped up? How to move in one direction without moving away from the opposite direction? Is it even possible?

And so, on a trip to Sun Moon Lake I posed this question to a visiting tea friend, "How can one move towards the light?" to which he politely responded, "You are the light." I readily laughed in agreement. His answer came so swiftly and innocently. It was almost shocking. He followed by saying, "If you want to reach the target, you must become the target." In one respect, it's very complicated and contradictory, in another, very simple and straightforward. This gave me a lot to think about. There are so many layers and depths to this cutting wisdom. Becoming the target transcends moving towards it and away from anything else. How then, does one become the target?

Taking all of this into consideration as I research and write about the vegetable garden and food system at Life Meets Life, I have to take a small step back and reflect on where my intentions are coming from in pursuing this project. How can pursuing this project become a motion towards light; and, moreover, how can I become this project?

There is a lot of energy being put into designing this perennial, intensive, closed and sustainable food system. That initial energy is going to determine the final outcome. Anything that materializes does so as a

result of my thoughts and intentions, so it is important that those thoughts and intentions be as pure and full of love and laughter as possible. Any action that comes through me is a corporeal replica of my own mind.

In one sense, I want a thoughtful foundation of Love from which all actions can stem. Ever increasing thoughts of Love will lead to ever increasing acts in accordance with that Love. Wouldn't you like to eat the fruits and vegetables grown and nurtured by someone in alignment with Love? Wouldn't you like to know that where your food is coming from is a sacred place governed by responsible agriculture practices that are harmonized with Nature? I would! And we will...

In another sense, I want no thought; I want to step out of the way so that Love Herself can act through me. May I be a clear vessel through which Natural farming and land stewardship can intuit. No mind means no interference, no trace, no ego. It means no action, in the sense that you are the action, not the one performing it.

*Wisdom teaches me that I am nothing
Love teaches me that I am everything
And between the two, my life flows*

—Tibetan Buddhist saying

In light of all of this, I ask myself: am I doing all of this out of love or out of some dissatisfaction with the way things are in the world? Am I growing food because I love to be at play in the soil or because I think more people should know where their food is coming from? Am I composting because I love transmuting organic matter into life-giving humus, or because we shouldn't waste kitchen scraps? Am I striving to be more sustainable, self-sufficient and Earth friendly because I have a deep reverence for the interconnectedness of all things, or because it's what we should be doing in these times of large-scale irresponsible agriculture management?

In truth, my intentions flow between both arguments: To some degree I pursue this project because I love Earth Stewardship: I move in the direction of light. To another degree, though, I do this because I feel things should be or should not be a particular way: I move away from the dark. To consider that a particular situation should be other than what it is, is to assume that I know better than the great intelligence that keeps this crazy universe swirling and unfurling. Call that

great intelligence “God,” “Spirit,” “Science,” “Reality,” or anything else you wish; it doesn’t matter; when you argue with it, you lose only 100% of the time. Everything is happening exactly as it has to for reasons so intricate, so intelligent that we will never understand them, nor do we need to.

What happens when you surrender to Reality as it is, when you accept things as they are, when you have faith in the unfolding of the universe? And what happens when your intentions and actions dance alongside surrender and faith? Can you even move away from or resist anything? You’re just dancing after all, surrendered to the forces that move you, faithful that your partner will catch you. When there is no resistance, one can only flow with the current of change that is our reality. A waterway moves down the path of least resistance, not away from the peak of the mountain. This is its Dao. When there is nothing to resist and you move with the momentum of Love, you can only move in the direction of Light because that will be your Dao, and some might say that in those moments you are the Light.

Love and do what thou wilt

— *St. Augustine*

Cha Dao offers all the means necessary to cultivate the qualities that put us in contact with the realization that we are the light; those being Love, Laughter, Surrender, Faith and Awareness to name but a few. A life of tea invokes meditation, gratitude, physical wellbeing, cleanliness, community, connection with Nature and development of gongfu. Know that within this tradition and with your support, the food system, or food sanctuary rather, at Life Meets Light will be as much as possible an unfolding product of movement towards the Light.

“Meditate. Live purely. Be quiet. Do your work with mastery. Like the moon, come out from behind the clouds. Shine!”

—*Buddha*



The background of the page is a lush green tea plantation. The top portion shows a close-up of tea leaves, while the bottom portion shows a wider view of tea bushes and a body of water with reeds.

GONG FU TEA TIPS

April 2013

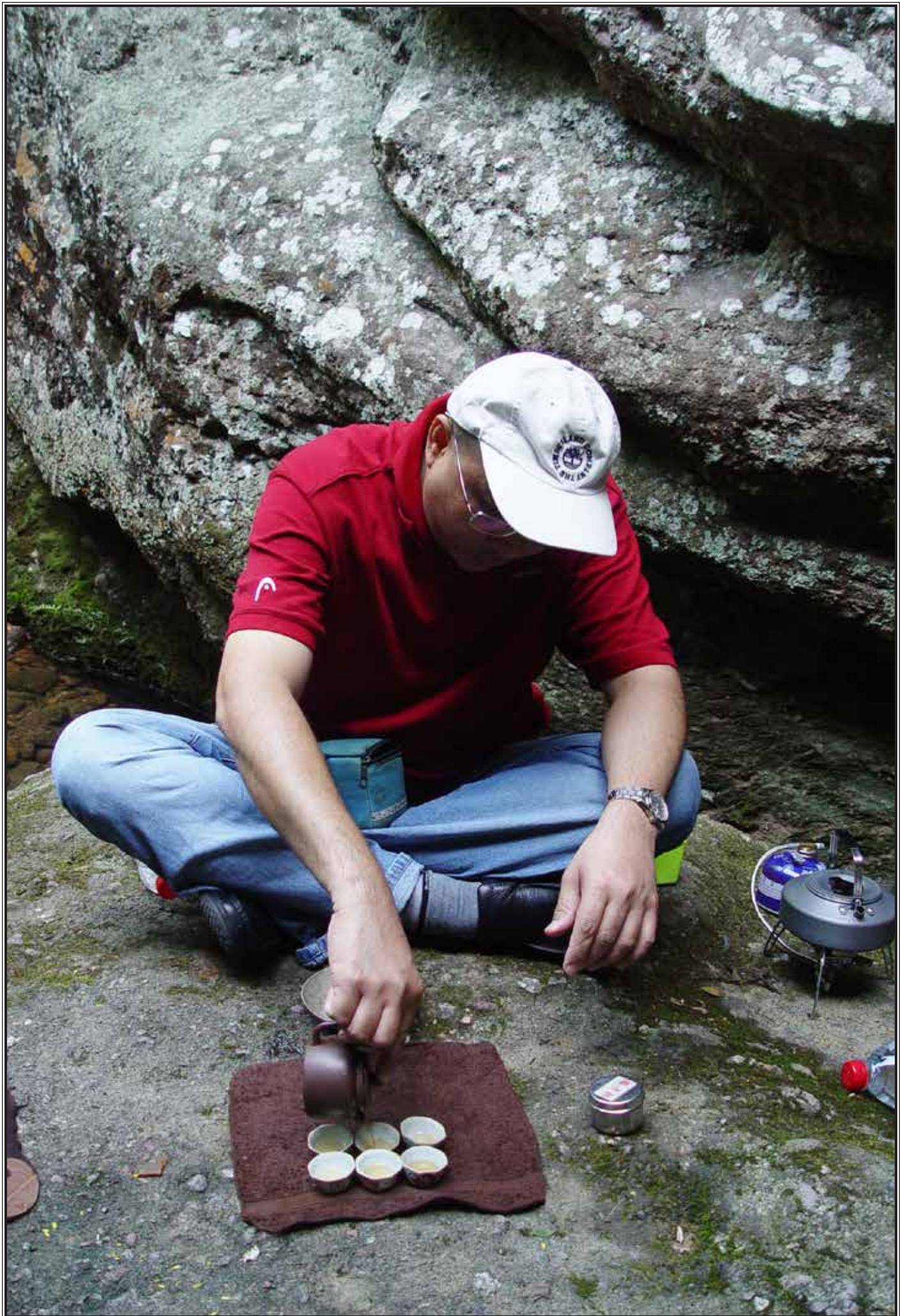
Nothing is more important in tea preparation than water and temperature. We have gone over water selection, source and storage, as well as preparation in the Five Elements series we did in past newsletters. For this month's gongfu tea tip, we can focus on learning the water temperatures and practice gauging the temperature with different senses. Traditionally, the time that water is heating up has been reserved for meditation and the sounds of the first boil have been poeticized as 'the wind sighing the pines.'

It is important to merge with your tea, as the brewing and you are not separate. Therefore, practice determining the temperature of your water without a device, solely based on your senses: first sight, then sound, and then feel. Sight is the easiest way to measure the water temperature. This is done ideally with a glass kettle, but you can always pop open the lid of any kettle and look inside. We look at the size and shape of the bubbles to determine the temperature. The first bubbles are traditionally called 'Shrimp Eye' and are about that size; next comes 'String of Pearls' in which the bubbles start to string together. This doesn't always happen (or it happens later on) if the kettle and/or fire does not distribute heat evenly. The next stage is called 'Crab Eye'; then comes 'Fish Eye', followed by the last, full boil, which is called either 'Old Man Hair' or 'Dragon Water'. This last stage is not ideal for any tea, as the water molecules start breaking apart and losing oxygen. The Qi of the water is quickly lost after this. If you see the fish eye bubbles starting to elongate and burst irregularly at the top, you are getting close to Old Man Hair. (You can also use steam to determine these phases if you don't have a glass kettle.)

Most green, yellow and white teas are best brewed with Shrimp Eye or String of Pearls. Crab Eye water is good for lighter oolongs. Fish Eye is best for Puerh, Black Tea, aged oolong or roasted/oxidized traditional oolong, etc. Most fine, organic teas can withstand higher temperatures and will still be nice with Fish Eye water. Try experimenting with different temperatures and different teas.

Once you have mastered the temperature by sight, which is relatively easy when you use a glass kettle, you can start to associate and correlate sounds with different temperatures. Try testing yourself: listen meditatively with your eyes closed and see if you can recognize the temperature. Then, open your eyes and check if you were correct. You can continue this until you accurately assess the temperature by the sound.

After sound comes feel. Each kettle will vibrate differently, but there will be a distinct frequency for each of the above temperatures. You can close your eyes and touch the handle, trying to feel the vibration associated with certain sounds and/or bubble sizes. In this way, you will be able to use any kettle. Most importantly, though, get to know your kettles and your teas, so that you can use the proper water temperature that a tea loves. Involving yourself more in your tea will make the results more rewarding and the changes in your life deeper...



A lush green tea plantation with rows of tea bushes under bright sunlight.

DRINKING GLOBAL TEA HUT

Experiences of our readers around the world

To Be Shared

Nick Dilks, United Kingdom

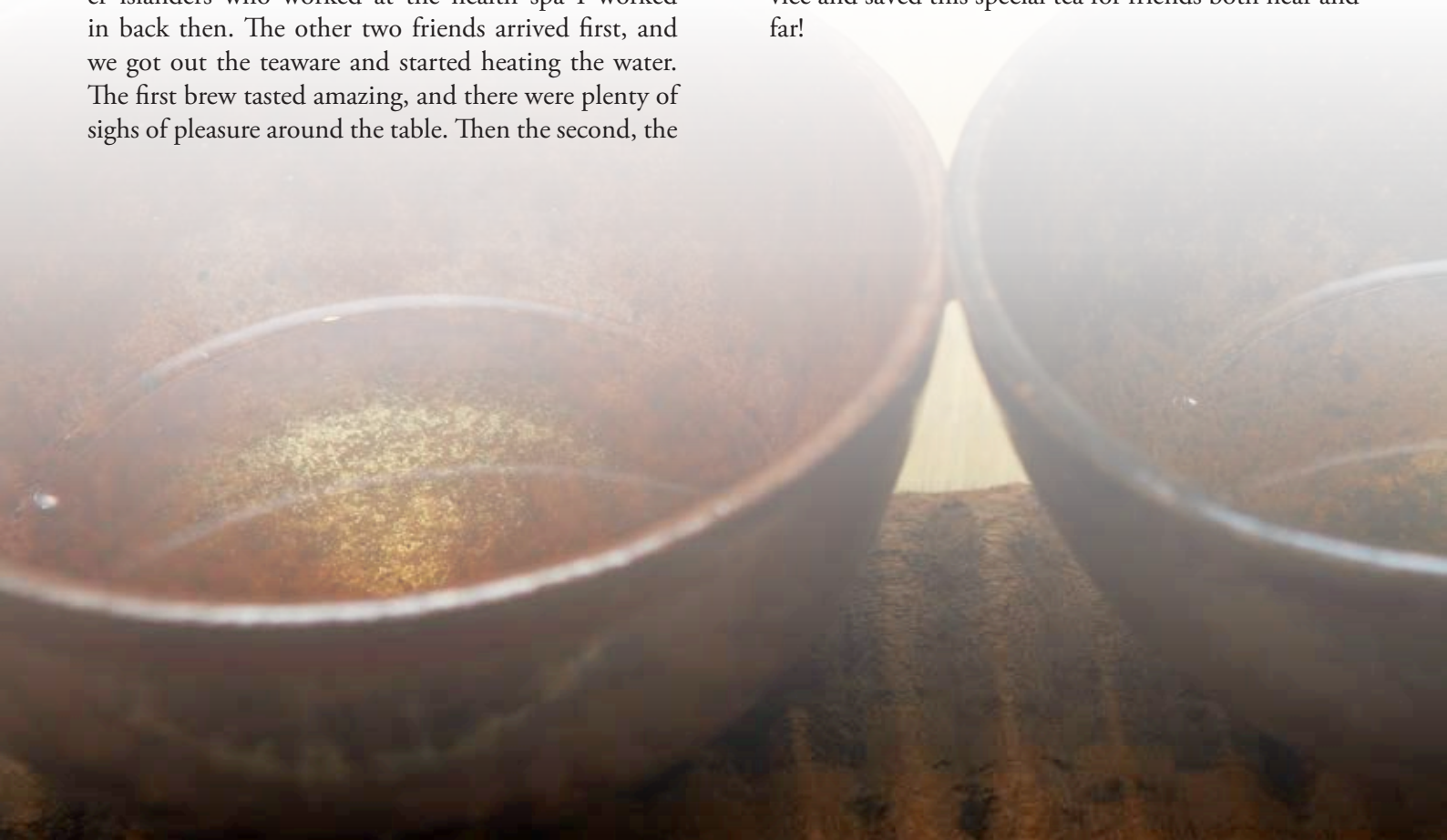
My Global Tea Hut reminiscence is of the unprocessed tea from back in August last year, which was harvested from the hundred and fifty year old completely wild bushes in the north of Taiwan. I sat alone on my veranda in Koh Samui, Thailand one Sunday, which was my day off back then, with the kettle bubbling across from the sofa. The bowl was ready on my wicker tea table, and I was leafing through the newsletter article because I always love to read about the monthly tea before I brew it. The brown sachet sat there unopened and the early morning sun lit up the banana and coconut trees all around.

As I read, I came to the sentence in the article that mentioned: 'If you are going to share this tea with a friend or loved one . . .', and suddenly I realized that I could not dishonor these ancient trees by drinking this tea all alone, so I put the sachet back in my tea box and pulled out a high mountain oolong to drink alone instead.

Later in the day, I called my good friends San Bao and Gila, who are Global Tea Hut friends from Thailand, and invited them over with a couple of other islanders who worked at the health spa I worked in back then. The other two friends arrived first, and we got out the teaware and started heating the water. The first brew tasted amazing, and there were plenty of sighs of pleasure around the table. Then the second, the

third, fourth... By the time we got to the eighth bowl, we were all transported into another dimension. I was very new to tea back then but already an avid devotee. My friends had been drinking it for longer but were more casual tea drinkers. All of us smiled wide-eyed at each other. I think it is safe to say that none of us had felt this 'high' before (at least from something legal!). One of my friends, in fact, accused me of spiking the tea with something 'a little extra'!

As the sun began to set, Gila and San Baos' footsteps were heard climbing the steep stone steps to my veranda. I think that they both immediately tuned into the energy and joined us for perhaps another four bowls before it felt like the tea had had enough (probably more due to my amateur brewing skills than the tea!). By then, the sun had gone down to visit the other side of the world, and the violets and purples began to blacken the sky as we all gazed at the sea and the mountains. I remember thinking about all the other Global Tea Hut lovers out there across the globe, and hoped that you all would have such a powerful session in your own ways. I was glad that I had heeded the article's advice and saved this special tea for friends both near and far!



Two Faces of One Tea

Petr Novak, Czech Republic

If my day is perfect, it starts with a few rituals and habits. After cold shower, and a half hour of Tai Qi there is time for Cha Qi. I light up charcoal, pour water into my kettle, clean a bit and prepare the tea leaves of the day... Over time, my relationship to tea has changed from a hobby into an intimate path—from a walk in the park to a pilgrimage through the mountains. And such mornings meditative tea moments become a very important part of that journey.

I am a happy participant of the Global Tea Hut party, though just for a few months now. And I am always surprised when the postman knocks on our door and asks for a signature for this brown envelope. Is it another month? Really? When the envelope is opened and the content examined, I usually move the Tea of the Month to a tea caddy to rest and breathe. It is waiting there for the right time, till we will be ready to meet again...

I found out that it is quite easy (and worthy, too) to divide the tea in two parts: First, I share one with our tea friends. There are always some timely comings and goings here. I do not even have to invite them. They already know that some living tea is resting here and that I will be happy to be host. As usual, when a

few friends are sitting around the tea table, we focus on the tea but also have a friendly chat and tea talk. The energy is more outside, shared and rippled.

The second part of the Tea of the Month I prepare for myself during one of my morning sessions. Here I am both host and guest. As the host, I am doing my best, trying to prepare the tea as delicately, powerfully and in a healing way. As guest I am grateful for the received cup, thankful for every sip. The energy is more concentrated and contemplative. I am focused on the tea. When drinking a cup under the Global Tea Hut, it is like sipping from a cup of light—sitting alone and knowing that with such cup of tea there is not such a thing like alone.

I like, and I see as meaningful, both faces which these leaves show me. The uplifting presence of friends, who show me their smiles, is as important to me as the power that makes my morning still...



Light Meets Life

光壽無量

Light Meets Life is still a vision, but it is one that becomes more real with each month that passes here. Every visit to that ancient and inspiring land awakens in us a desire to see it put to sacred use. And each time we are there she reveals more of how she wants to work together with us—confirmation of her acceptance. Small and practical details are even appearing as insight every time we travel up to see this wonderful land that has embraced us. We can even see the visitors walking around, meditating on rocks, wandering the tea garden that will have varietals from all over Asia so guests can learn from the trees in a hands-on way. We have cleared a bit of the land where the guest houses will be and have begun to see how they will be shaped and in what way they will function; and the same for the meditation hall. And as the vision takes shape, and the imaginary foreground blends with the very vivid background of this spirited land, our hearts are filled with deep joy and a lasting sense of meaning to inform our work and lives.

We are very committed to leaving as much of the property untamed as possible. We aren't building a center in the mountains to bring the city out with us—quite the opposite: we want to bring the people of the city to a place where they can connect with Nature. We are currently in the process of preparing blueprints for the new center and are searching for architects who understand our vision and will help to build in harmony with the land and the life there. It is such a vibrant place, with hawks, monkeys, spiders, a waterfall and incredibly fertile verdure everywhere. We will maintain that wild sense of life there, and hope to build in a way that makes it seem as if the buildings were always there—a natural part of the mountain.

On a recent trip up into the mountain to take visitors we also discovered a beautiful bamboo grove tucked away in a quiet spot. If you didn't know, drinking tea amongst the bamboo at night during a full moon is one of the best tea settings possible. Since ancient times tea lovers have sought out bamboo groves for full moon gatherings. The bamboo literally talk, and shine silver under the radiant moon. And you are all invited to the monthly full moon sessions that will be happening at Light Meets Life once it is built!

Two Big Announcements

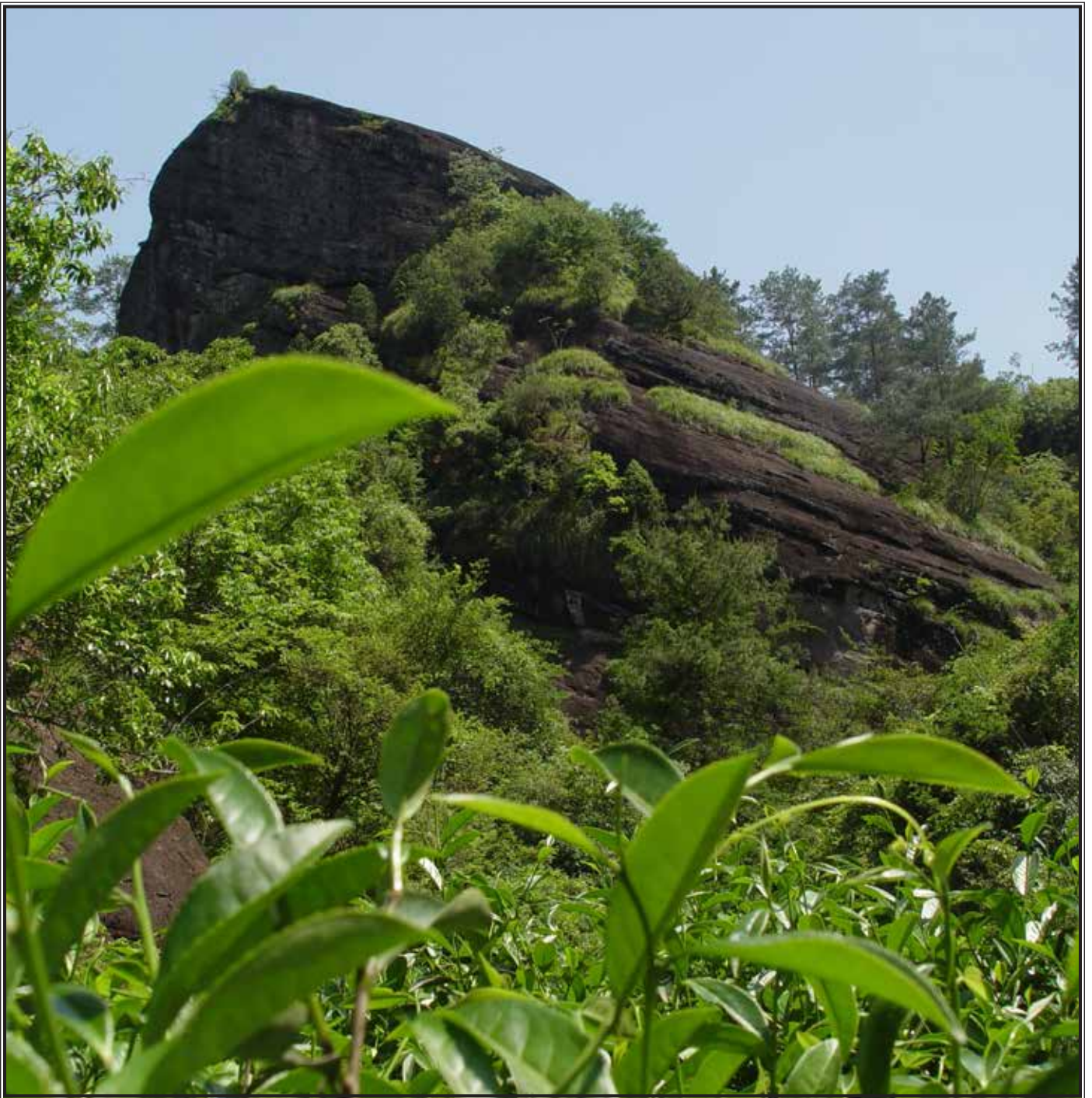
We have something wonderful to tell you all: Taiwan has a lot of zoning and building laws, and many of them are a bit difficult to navigate. It turned out that the location where we had planned to build our main hall was regulated in a way we hadn't foreseen and so we were going to have to reduce the size by as much as half. This was disappointing, but there was little we could do about it. And as we reached acceptance, since there was no other choice, a donor stepped up and bought us the adjacent two acres that are just beneath our land and do not fall under the same regulations! That's right: our three acres has become *five*!

Now the main hall is back to its original size; it has just moved to some flatter land just below where it was originally going to be. And the previous place where the main hall was to be built is now the location of the guest houses. It is amazing when pieces come together in such magical ways and we find the universe responding so beautifully to the vision we are manifesting, especially because it is selfless.

If that weren't enough exciting news (Yes, five acres!) we have decided to press three kinds of Puerh to help promote the new center. There will be two Sheng cakes and one Shou cake available in August. We plan to offer them at cost, essentially giving them away. Then, anyone who purchases one can choose how much they would like to donate beyond the cost of the cake. All of the proceeds will then go to build the new center. We will leave the details about this magical tea until the date approaches, but the tea will be magical, indeed. And it is amazing that the old trees will also be contributing some energy towards the building of the world's only, and definitely best, free tea center!

Work to be done, contributions to be made

Right now our dearest Lindsey, Jared and Greg are hard at work on a proposal to show potential investors in the vision of a free tea and meditation center for people worldwide. This proposal has taken them all many



hours and is still not complete. Raise a bowl to the creation of a powerful portfolio that will allow those with an interest in donating a larger amount to feel comfortable that their money is being stewarded properly, and that none of it will be lost astray.

We are also working towards getting our own non-profit status and getting fiscal sponsorship in the meantime so that we can offer such donors a tax break in exchange for their gift. We are close to being ready to include such benefits in our proposal.

Finally, we are also planning more fundraising trips and events. Wu De will be in Russia this summer (both east and west) doing several events to raise money for Light Meets Life. Also, there will be several public and private events in Los Angeles this August. We will let you know the details in the coming months.

Should any of you wish to contribute or have any ideas for ways to help us realize this vibrant dream, please contact us. You can donate at the Center page of our GTH website or send a check to:

**Global Tea Hut West
2441 Beverley Ave. #6
Santa Monica, CA 90405
United States**

Or [contact](#) us for other ways to support.

A background image of tea leaves, with a dark blue banner at the top containing the title and author. The bottom half of the page features a blurred image of tea leaves.

BREW THE TEA NOT THE GENRE

Article by Wu De

Tea is a Dao because it leads up to and beyond mastery of the self. In all arts, there comes a point at which the artist reaches the limitations of the medium, and the boundaries of the personal. Progress then leads into the transpersonal: the point at which we meet the divine ground. The transpersonal is our consciousness freed of a sense of self—liberated of the jail yard of privation we all face. In order to go any further, the master must move beyond the medium: Having mastered the art of tea, one realizes that any and every step must also include every aspect of life. What we eat, how we exercise, meditate and even how we treat people all affect our tea. The fact is that without mastery of the self in every way, there cannot be any mastery in tea.

True mastery is finding that point in ourselves that meets with the Dao—the universe we are immersed in—and then acting from out of its intelligence and power, rather than our own limited perspective. And all that is born out of that deep stillness, beyond rationality and ego, will inspire others to seek out that place in themselves. In other words, when we brew tea from beyond the self, resting in our hearts, others respond and join us in that space.

If metaphysical truth and spiritual upliftment are qualities of great art, then the artist must attune her sensitivity and develop spiritually as much as she

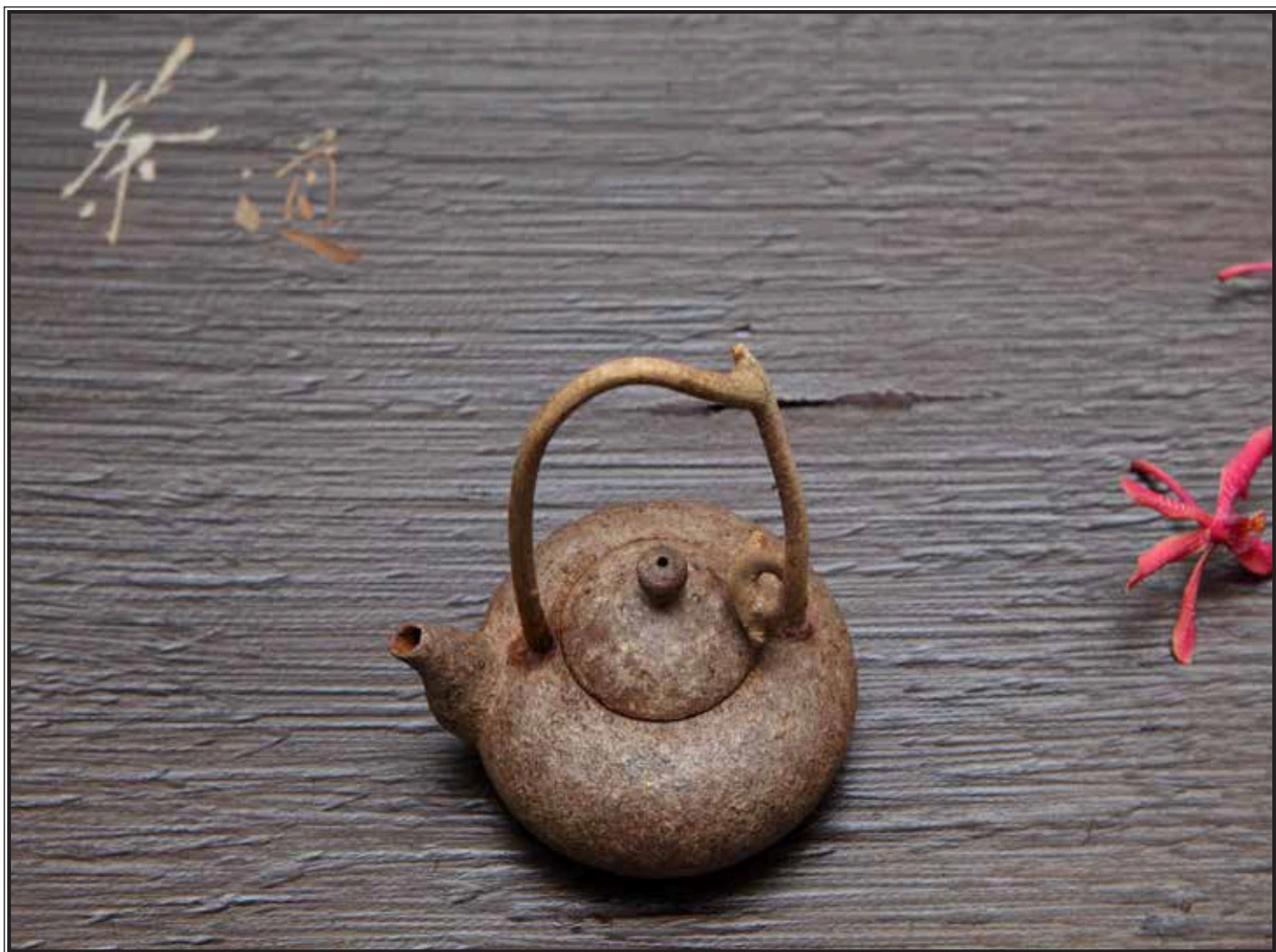
learns to use the guitar, brush or tea pot. To reach the goal where spirit flows through you into your tea, you must be a clean vessel. The master remains open to the ocean of spirit we are immersed in, channeling some of it down through this finite form and into the art, which is then shared and integrated back into the divine ground through the consciousness of others.

Great artists, musicians, dancers and athletes have all stirred us to awe, performing feats beyond the ordinary, beyond even themselves and anything they have achieved thus far. And they cannot answer how they did it—only point skyward—for it came from outside their sense of self. It came from the place their soul melts into the divine ground.

To inspire means to breathe in, and in ancient cultures—Chinese and Western—the breath and the spirit have always been synonymous. To in-spire is to rest in the spirit; and inspiration is access to the spirit, both creatively and receptively. The master transcends the limited self and channels the universal.

The poet is a light and winged and holy thing and there is no invention in him until he's been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him.

—Socrates—



The great intelligence of this world is always present, always now. To be in harmony with the flow of Reality, the master must also be rooted in the Now. The great athlete has no time for mind: no time for past, future or fantasy. If an athlete has performed poorly, it is because he or she had something on their mind. Some bookies made a living finding out personal facts about famous professional athletes and using that information to their advantage. In the split second a ball is traveling hundreds of miles an hour, the batter has no time to think of the girlfriend he split up with recently. If he does, he strikes out. In fact, he cannot even think of the bat, the ball or his body; for if he reflects for one millisecond on where his arm should be, he misses his chance. He must act without thought, beyond reason and past the sense of self: the transpersonal. In that way, the great dancer and the music are one. She flows with the rhythm magically, transported before the note even sounds. The melody and her movements are not separate; they are the same symphony.

Mastery in tea flows in a similar harmony. When one is in harmony with the present moment, the connection between the brewer, kettle, pot, tea, bowls and drinkers vanishes. The master adapts subtly, allowing the emptiness in all the vessels to accept the flow of

water and liquor through it. Such tea is transformative, indeed.

There are a lot of brewing instructions that have a general validity to them, but which also may hinder our progress towards the transpersonal—towards harmony with our tea and the moment, which leads to harmony with the Dao in all aspects of our life.

The more scientific approach to tea brewing, for example, is to focus on time, temperature and amount of tea. Indeed, these are three common errors for beginners and getting a feel for the amount of tea, the temperature of the water and the steeping time can lead to a more delicious cup of tea. But there are way too many factors for any of these criteria to last longer than even a few weeks of progress in tea. Amount is crucial, but different teas require different amounts; some are long and striped and twice the volume weighs half as much; some are incredibly sensitive and others are forgiving. Also, the size of the brewing vessel, as well as the material it is made of, will determine the amount of tea. Similarly, water temperature and steeping time also quickly evaporate into thousands of factors and influences. Most tea drinkers who travel such a road quickly realize how limiting focusing on these three criteria alone can be. Controlling the time, temperature

Brew the Tea Not the Genre

and amount isn't really controlling anything at all. But it does bring us to an important aspect of mastery: it isn't about control!

As we mentioned above, true mastery isn't controlling all the factors (as if that were possible anyway). It is about achieving harmony with the moment, and acting with the current of the Dao behind you. Approaching tea with conceptual ideas about time, temperature and amount assumes that control will result in better tea. One then uses a scale, thermometer and timer to brew tea, relying on machines to help control these aspects of the tea. All of this further disconnects the brewer from the tea and the moment, leading away from mastery of self and harmony with the Dao.

Similarly, a lot of teas will come with brewing instructions that are specific to a genre of tea. But within the genre of Green Tea, for example, there are hundreds of varieties from China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea. Each one is different, and there are hundreds of ways of brewing such teas. Furthermore, such instructions rarely come from personal, experiential wisdom. The guidelines are hardly ever based on the trial-and-error wisdom of the vendor, instead offering the same information that can be garnished online or from popular literature on tea. Continuing with Green Tea, an illustration of this would be the way most all Green Tea packages claim that Green Tea must be brewed using lower temperatures of water, and that to use water that is too hot will cook the tea. This can be true for a lot of Green Teas, but not all. Really fine green teas can often take hotter water (not as hot as Puerh or aged Oolong) and the result is not something inferior, but something *different*. Such packages also claim that Green Tea cannot be aged and expires at a certain time, but we have a

twelve-year-old Long Jing here at the center that would beg to differ. Some allusions to freshness are true, as aged green tea and fresh green tea are very different—and preferences are preferences—but so-called stale to is misleading, since *all* fine, organic tea can be aged.

Brewing tea based on genre is a bit like categorizing groups of people based on proclivities or other prejudice. Reducing living things to conceptual categories and treating them thus is a form of violence. The intellectual and egoic distance from Nature is the sickness behind the gross pollution of the environment by greedy companies and persons who do so smiling all the way to the bank, ignorant of the fact that in harming their Earth they only harm themselves. Tea is a living being and each and every meeting is unique. Unlike us, tea leaves are not disconnected from their source. All the flavors, aromas, nutrients and spiritual juju in a handful of leaves got into those leaves from the roots, trunk and branches of the tree and remain there now. The tea liquor and tree are one.

Rather than brewing a genre, why not meet each and every tea as a unique friend and brew her accordingly? Even the teas that you drink again and again are new every time, if you but pay attention. And like all tea wisdom, this can teach us how to live as well: for how often do we dismiss a flower or some grass, not stopping to see how beautiful it is, saying instead "It's just grass", as if we had seen *this* grass before. Categorizing has been useful to us as a species, and has led to many new and important scientific discoveries. But living in a conceptual, rational world comes with its own misery, and our next stage in the evolution of consciousness is to transcend the personal and rational, which doesn't mean that we'll be incapable of ra-





tional thought. To the contrary, when you rest outside the mind, it becomes a better tool than when you are consumed by it and lack mastery of the self. Also, we can then choose when to differentiate and dismiss, and when to recognize the beauty and uniqueness of *this* grass, in *this* moment.

Meet everyone for the first time, every time. This offers people the chance to transform and the room to grow. The same can be said for tea: every tea is unique and should be brewed the way it wants to. You can learn from a tea, as you would from a person you are getting to know, developing more skillful ways of relating to her; but you still must allow her room to change and grow, and be ready to adapt every single tea session to suit that particular session. Otherwise, you will never know how far and into what reaches a particular tea can stretch. You will assume you know all there is to know about her if you don't listen and flow with the session, adapting and coaxing the tea along the currents of Dao.

My master always says that the highest gong fu, the highest level of mastery, is when you can discriminate each and every leaf of tea, for no two leaves are the same under Heaven. That level may be beyond us all, but it isn't about reaching an objective anyway. Though

we often talk about progress in tea, the wise don't strive to arrive. Happiness isn't the name of a hotel at your destination, it is the journey. As soon as you meet your goal, another horizon presents itself. The true student of the Leaf learns from the way tea is present and completely immersed in the moment. This is our chance to brew perfectly: this very bowl, this very tea. In this moment, we can complete our harmony, let go of the self and drop all our goals. In the transpersonal connection with the divine ground there are no goals to achieve, no heights to scale: there is only this simple bowl of tea, which spans the breadth of the universe...



A close-up photograph of vibrant green tea leaves, likely from a Camellia sinensis plant, filling the top portion of the page. The leaves are glossy and have serrated edges.

OUTDOOR TEA

Article by Kaiya, the Resplendent



One of the greatest joys in serving tea lies in the fact that no two ceremonies are alike, an aspect of tea that has long been appreciated and is expressed eloquently in one of my favorite tea aphorisms: “Ichi go ichi” (one encounter, one chance). We celebrate this in our daily ceremonies by constantly changing our tea and flower arrangements. Hopefully this aspect of our tea also flows into our daily lives. In every meeting we have, we do our best to treat co-workers, strangers, family and old friends with all the reverence and celebration of a first and final meeting.

The uniqueness of a tea session is why it's not really possible to give formulaic instructions on tea preparation (or our lives for that matter!). However, this month I wanted to present some guidelines to drinking tea outdoors (or perhaps merely performing a ceremony at another person's house or an unfamiliar venue), which presents a significantly wider variety of circumstances than we are normally presented with in our tea rooms at home.

Serving tea outside our tea rooms is a challenging but rewarding endeavor, and you never know what difficulties may unexpectedly present themselves. Over

the last few years, it has become one of my favorite activities, so I wanted to share some of what I've learned and hopefully encourage all of you to give it a try yourselves!

I actually remember the very first time I made tea outdoors. Perhaps I had admired one too many of Wu De's paintings of a tea sage perched on a branch with a fatal drop lying below, or I don't know what, but I took my gongfu tea set, a glass kettle, and a camp stove to a waterfall, and instead of being satisfied in drinking tea next to the waterfall, I had to climb up the wall and sit on a ledge so small it could only be sat on in a half lotus position, or else with one's leg's dangling into space. What's more, it wasn't a particularly private area, and people were bound to come along and stare—people who might've instead sat down and shared a cup had I just stayed on the ground like a sane person. Miraculously, I didn't break anything (including myself), but looking back on that experience, I have to laugh.

For one thing, it's important to remember that drinking tea shouldn't be about showing off our skills to others, or adding to our collection of tea experiences; drinking tea outdoors doesn't have to be done out





of striving or boredom or getting anyone's attention. Proper tea spirit is one of a desire to share, so choose one of those days where it's sinful to be indoors (you know the ones) and get out there with a desire to share: a gorgeous day with yourself, and with your tea as well! Tea will be as pleased to see the sun and feel a bit of breeze as you are. Secondly, as our brother Steve wrote so beautifully about in past newsletters, if you are going to choose a public place, do so because you are open to sharing that day and that tea with others who may happen to come along.

First things first: pack your tea spirit, and then choose a destination that makes sense. If you really need to go deep into your inner being, perch on a cliff or go somewhere more off the beaten path.

Next, choose suitable teaware. The preservation of teaware is the primary, external purpose behind all movements in a tea ceremony, so it is very important to remember when selecting teaware to take outdoors. Part of respecting your teaware is not endangering it! Not only is it extremely important to pack the teaware you bring with great care (I use both a cloth and a box for each item to be sure) but which teaware you bring is very important as well. We learned this the very hard way ourselves when we once took an antique silver ket-

tle with us to prepare tea outside. Before we could do anything about it, a rambunctious guest took hold of it and began examining it, then just as suddenly dropped it onto a priceless and irreplaceable tea bowl, smashing the bowl to bits and leaving a sizeable dent in the kettle. (I once nearly lost an antique tea cup in much the same way).

We brought this teaware because we wanted to share the best tea we could make with our guests, which is proper tea spirit. But the fact is that outside of your tea room, the uncontrollable factors are tremendously greater--you never know what might happen. In my experience, it's best to leave the gongfu equipment at home and bring along simple bowls, no teapot at all, or perhaps a side-handle pot, and prepare simpler teas as well. There are exceptions to this, like when you are asked to prepare gongfu tea at an event, which sometimes happens.

There is a lot of poetry in this approach to outdoor tea. Drinking bowl tea takes us back to the time of the Daoist mendicants and their mountain huts, drinking tea in the moonlight and beneath waterfalls, merging with Nature and the flow of the Universe. Gongfu tea has more sophistication, more civilization, more of the artistry of man in it than the artistry of Nature, and

so it is more at home... well, at home. Which isn't to say gongfu tea can't also be an expression of the flow of the Universe; in fact at its peak that is exactly what it is, and it's just as devoid of Self-expression as bowl tea is, but that's another article. Also, gongfu tea is better enjoyed in smaller, more intimate settings and that generally isn't the case if you are going to brew tea where people are.

So, on to the details... The general inventory will be the same for everything from small to large trips, but there are a lot of personal and situational decisions to make in choosing those items. At the most basic, you will need a kettle, a heat source, bowls, a *jen xui* (waste water pot) a cloth or a board, water and tea. Personally, even on a small trip without a car, I don't mind carrying a large pack and bringing a full complement of items with me. I will bring two kettles, a heat source, a warming heat source and a side-handle pot almost every time. But sometimes you just want to get out there and make a little tea, and simpler is better. It's nice to have just one kettle and meditate in between the boilings and just take it easy and slow, especially if you know there won't be a stream of people sitting down waiting for you to serve them.

The foremost element in tea, besides the tea, of course, is water. If it's a personal trip and not a big event, I take enough water with me to fill my largest kettle six times, which is enough to give a good session of two different teas, at least for the size of my kettle. Change according to your teaware of course. I find water for sale in a jug of this size at the store, pour the water into my drinking water at home, then refill it with my tea water stored in my water jar at the last possible moment before I leave to ensure my water is of the best quality.

For an indoor event we have to use an electric burner or hotplate (usually) and possibly one of those plug-in electric kettles if we need water very fast all the time. If we're going outdoors, we have to choose between gas and charcoal. For a trip with a car, we take charcoal, a brazier and a warming brazier or alcohol burner to keep one kettle hot while the other boils on the bigger brazier. If I'm alone, hiking with a pack, I will generally choose gas, because even a small brazier is heavy, and the charcoal takes a lot of space and may make a mess in my pack. Simpler is better for pack trips. I like to also bring an alcohol burner if I do take a second kettle, but you have to be careful to store your alcohol in a way it won't spill. But two kettles and an alcohol burner are for a bigger, heavier pack. The simplest thing to do is just bring a single gas burner (you can find small ones at a camping store) and one kettle. Don't forget to bring extra gas and check that your burner is full before you leave!

The rest of your miscellaneous teaware is really up to you, and is fairly personal. You may or may not

want to bring a tea scoop to present your tea, for example. I like to bring my tea in a *natsume* (Japanese tea container), which also protects the tea from being crushed as I carry it. For a *jen xui*, it's important to bring one made of wood or metal, so it won't break, preferably small in size. If I know I'm going somewhere to sit at a picnic table or on stone, I will bring only a tea cloth. If I don't know the terrain where I will wind up making tea, I will bring a small board, stone, or perhaps an inexpensive tea boat/pillow, on which to set my side-handle pot, and a long thin piece of wood on which to set my bowls. In both cases, I take a tea cloth to go under it all and usually a cloth to cover the ground where I'll sit. I will also be sure to bring a trivet to set my hot kettle on when not in use so I am not in danger of burning any surfaces, and a tea cloth or two to wipe up any spills and to dry my teaware with after I am finished. I prefer not to take music and enjoy the sounds of Nature, but sometimes the right music can be a nice touch even outdoors. Incense can be a nice touch, but you'll need a lidded censure.

I hope this inspires you to take advantage of your next beautiful day and get out there and share some tea somewhere new. And now hopefully you can leave that sense of "Am I forgetting anything?" behind you, with your trusty comprehensive list provided by yours truly. (Or at the very least the knowledge that now you can Blame Kaiya!™ if anything goes wrong!)

Searching for the Hermit in Vain

*I asked the boy beneath the pines.
He said, "The master's gone alone
Herb-picking somewhere on the mount,
Cloud-hidden, whereabouts unknown.*

—Chia Dao (777-841)







ZEN & TEA

Article by Wu De



en is limitless. Zen outdoes itself, outstrips itself in direct experience. Ideas, concepts and teachings, however true, are but stones thrown at the stars. In Zen, the words are ‘fingers pointing to the moon’ and not to be confused with the moon itself. The teachings are not the Truth (capital T) only the fingers pointing at it. And the Truth, like the moon, takes up the whole sky, so it can be pointed to from so many angles, perspectives and positions. You can point up at the moon from even the most remote island, the mountaintop or valley, jungle or desert. And this is why Zen is more of an art than an ideology, for each Zen master points to that direct experience in a unique way. And oh how many ways there have been: from wild, outrageous masters to humble, reserved and disciplined ones; those who spoke plainly and simply and those who spoke only in witty riddles; and from those who devoted themselves to service to those who lived distant and carefree. Zen is not about being a certain type of person or living in any certain way. It is about being who you truly are.

The reason Zen has found its way into so many arts, including tea, is that it has never been about passing on a special set of beliefs, ideas, dogmas, rites or rituals. Zen is a direct experience. And the Truth is often more easily hinted at in metaphors and poetry than it is in literal speech, which is not to say that Zen hasn’t ever been communicated in the simple and ordinary—it has. But art, like Zen, is often nonverbal; and if it is sacred art then it too points to a direct experience. The Zen master isn’t trying to teach a particular thing; only to use what is at hand to instigate an awakening of harmony in the student. Arts like tea often are capable of this transmission in ways that words could never be. Because it transcends rationality, many Zen masters are famous for behaving irrationally in an attempt to free their students from being stuck in a mind-made life. Tea and Zen, however, are both beyond rationality and irrationality. A bowl of tea neither makes sense nor is it nonsense. It just is: completely and fully all that it is!

Though there are so many ways to convey the experience of Zen, there are a few things that all Zen traditions share in common, including our own. A good place to start is with the one who brought Zen to China, Bodhidharma, and his teachings, which form the basis of all Zen thought. He taught that Zen is:

- *A special transmission outside scripture*
- *Without any dependence on words*
- *Directly pointing to the heart*
- *Insight into one’s true nature*

They say that Zen began when the Buddha was teaching at Vulture Peak. His students waited for his sermon to begin, only to find that at the very end he did nothing but hold up a flower and depart. One monk in the audience, named Mahakasyapa, understood the Buddha’s teaching and smiled in enlightenment. Something was transmitted between them—some unseen and unheard spark passed from teacher to student. Many of you know that spark firsthand. It is still alive and burning today. After Mahakasyapa, twenty-seven such fires were ignited from master to student until the twenty-eighth patriarch received transmission: Bodhidharma, which means ‘knower of the way’, who traveled to China to spread this tradition there. A more religious Buddhism was already prevalent in China at the time, supported by the emperor, but he wasn’t there to promote religion. His teaching, the four principals listed above, became known as ‘The Doctrine of the Buddha Heart’ and were aimed at an enlightenment experience. Bodhidharma relied on direct transmission outside of any doctrine, dogma or scripture: confirmation in the eyes of a master who has already achieved such a state of mind.

Bodhidharma couldn’t find a worthy student at first, as his teaching was focused so much on meditation and being, rather than rites and rituals, beliefs and dogmas, which is why it was called “Chan” after the Sanskrit “Dhyana” that means “meditation.” Eventually Bodhidharma did pass on the torch to his student Hu-ike who in turn found a small group of students, but it wasn’t until the sixth patriarch after Bodhidharma, Hui Neng, that Chan became a popular school in China. When the Japanese came to receive Chan, they mostly learned it from the southern schools who pronounced it “Tsan”, which they translated to “Zen”.

Though Zen does not rely on any words, it can and does use words to point the way. It also uses art and even tea. Not needing words means we are free to come and go through any words we want, express ourselves in any way, so long as it is true, natural and direct. Relying on words means living in concepts, which is not living at all. So many people are living a conceptual, virtual life. They have ideas and concepts about who they are

without really knowing themselves. In awakening, we find that our concepts of things aren't the things as they are.

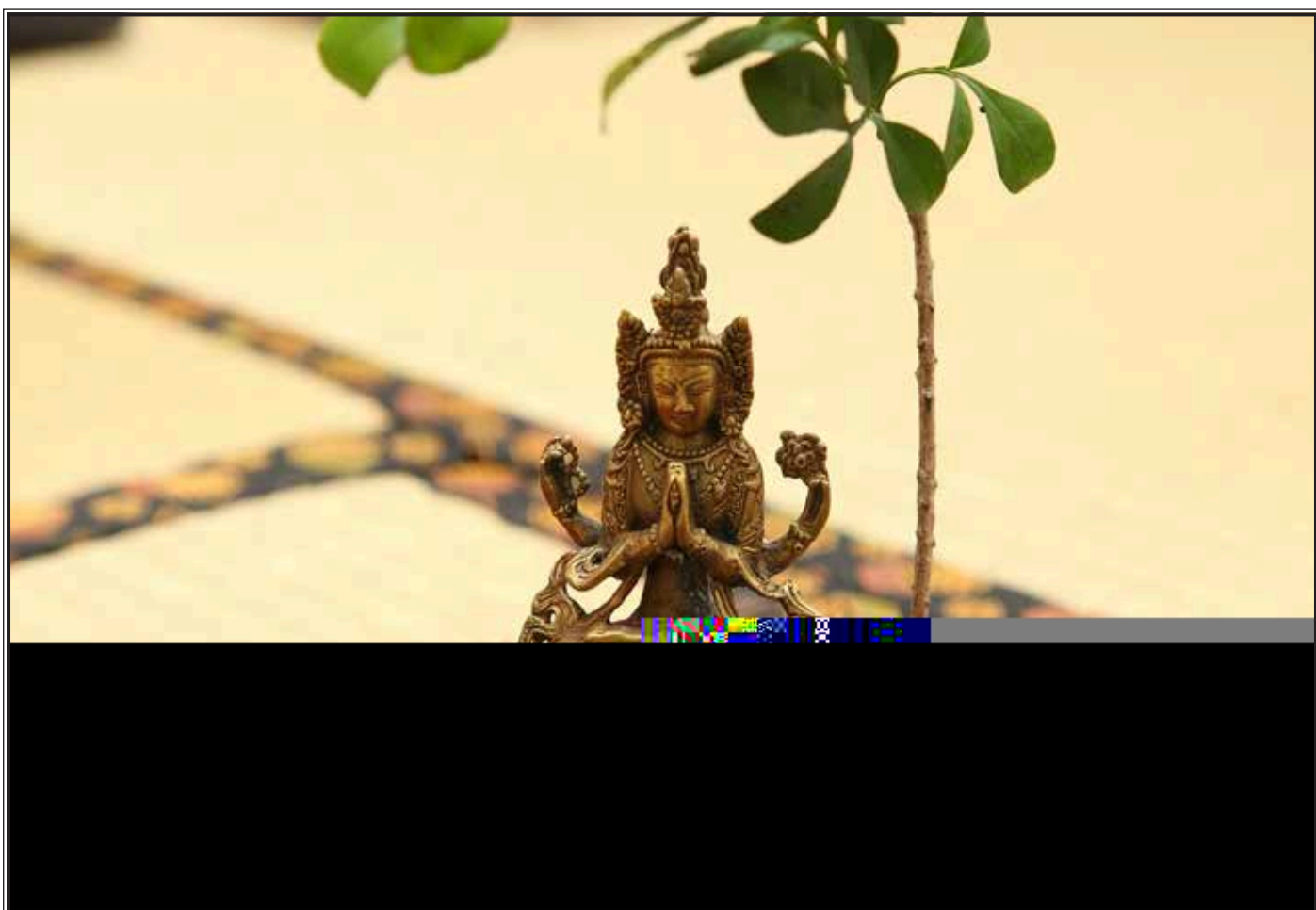
Zen teachings, in whatever form, should point inwards. Our answers must be experiential to be transformative. It isn't enough to just see the finger; you must also find the moon to which it points. It leads us to our true nature.

You can see how and why it has been said for so many hundreds of years that 'Tea and Zen are One Flavor'. Tea satisfies all of the four aspects of Bodhidharma's teaching in such a simple and profound way. In fact, one of the origin legends of tea is based on Bodhidharma. The scrolls say that he was in the middle of his nine year meditation, having withdrawn because he found no student ready to listen to his message. Midway, he became drowsy and started to doze off. As legend has it, the great lion of a teacher roared and tore off his eyelids, tossing them aside. And it was where those magic eyelids landed that the first tea tree sprouted!

When the Japanese came to China to learn about Zen they also brought back tea, teaware and even tea seeds to plant in Japan. When asked why they had brought this plant, they said that the Chinese masters had told them that if they wanted Zen to flourish in Japan tea would have to be planted there as well, since they are 'one flavor'. The first people to domesticate tea

were likely monks and as a result every tea mountain in China is home to a Zen monastery. And whether tea grew wild there or they chose the location to plant tea, its spirit traveled wherever Zen went. They grew up together.

You can use tea to cultivate your own Zen, your own meditation. Beyond that, tea is amazing because it can also be used to communicate whatever you have cultivated to others, and do so non-verbally. Our lineage can truly be a special transmission outside any dogma or scripture; and we don't rely on words, but rather the sutras written by Nature in these leaves. Also, tea can and does point directly inward, to the heart space. Finally, tea will show us our own true Buddha-nature—if we but follow Her inward. And then we may share some of the insights that this journey extracts from the Leaf, from Zen, from us...





INITIATION

Article by Lindsey Goodwin

By the time this newsletter arrives at your door, I will have been initiated in the tea tradition of which we speak of in these pages. The very thought of this makes me smile for numerous reasons. My very first memory of tea is one of presence, of complete attention. Throughout my life, tea has been a source of comfort, a means of connection and much more.

My tea journey has only just begun, though I have been around tea for some time. And so, with seriousness and humility, I receive initiation as a symbol of this beginning. But beyond that, I welcome the ceremony of initiation as an affirmation and celebration of what already is. An initiation is an opportunity to formally and deeply thank Tea and this tradition for being not just a path, but the path. It is a time to recognize that Tea calls to me as the river to Siddhartha:

He looked lovingly into the flowing water, into the transparent green, into the crystal lines of its wonderful design. He saw bright pearls rise from the depths, bubbles swimming on the mirror, sky blue reflected in them. How he loved this river, how it enchanted him, how grateful he was to it! In his heart he heard the newly awakened voice speak, and it said to him: 'Love this river, stay by it, learn from it.' Yes, he wanted to learn from it, he wanted to listen to it. It seemed to him that whoever understood this river and its secrets, would understand much more, many secrets, all secrets.

—Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*

Living Tea has spoken to me and I have received Her message to love, to stay, to learn, to listen. Like the river, and like so many other things, there is incredible profundity to be found within Tea when you turn your attention, love and gratitude toward Her. Once recognized as a repository of wisdom, a single point of focus becomes more, it becomes many, it becomes all... Leaving behind self, you become more, you become many, you become all... The river is Siddhartha's path to realizing Buddha-nature. Tea is, for me and for many of you, the same path to walk.

I love Tea and I love the path of Tea. I love Tea more than any other material thing and I love Her as far more than a mere physical object. To me, Tea is wisdom, She is spirit, She is Nature, She is interconnection, She is life itself. Similarly, this path is not a mere experience or kick, but a Dao, a way of living in relation to eternal truth. As such, this path is a font of calm joy, of gladly received challenges for growth, of trust in all that is... and much more that I have yet to discover as the journey unfolds! I welcome it with love.

With genuine love comes abundant gratitude; I am eternally grateful to Tea. Alongside meditation, She has helped me come away from so much misery and to find so much peace. She has helped me to heal myself in mind, body and spirit. She has worked through me to help others in ways that I could not have dreamt of prior to finding my path with Her. And She has brought me meaningful connections with people around the globe, ones who I might have never encountered had





it not been for our mutual love of the Leaf. For this, I cannot help but feel overwhelmed by thankfulness.

And more and more, I'm finding that steadfast attention is a natural extension of love and gratitude. Slowly, bit by bit, I'm beginning to listen to Tea as I would a dear friend and to learn from Her as I could a wise teacher. This practice becomes a kind of devotion, a way to recognize the holy in Tea and, through Her, in all things. The more devoted to Her I am, the easier the practice of listening to and learning from Tea grows (and, for that matter, so does listening to and learning from all things).

Like Siddhartha's river, Tea can become a powerful transmitter of intuitive wisdom. From Her, we can learn profound lessons about change, non-attachment, the oneness of all things, the illusory nature of time, and life itself. But these lessons do not come without a price, and that price is surrender. The higher we hold our heads, the less wisdom can flow down into us. And so I devote myself to Tea, submitting as much of myself as I can at each stage of growth and letting Tea do the rest.

Like Siddhartha in the story, when leaving behind the self, you, I, all of us become more, each separate being transforms into the one, elevated and expanded

into the all. This is something I am only beginning to glimpse at this stage in my journey. It appears now as a softening of the ego, a relaxing of the perceptions of self and other, of guest and host, a gradual dissolving of the self that Tea may flow through me, pure and clean and clear and direct on Her path to others, just as She wants to move.

What little of this process I've seen so far is beautiful beyond all comparison. This was a surprise to me at first. Letting go of the self and submitting to something else sounds, on the surface, like a loss. In fact, it's quite the opposite. After all, if you are not accepting of your path, how can you accept anything from it? For this reason, an essential step of the path is embracing the path, loving the path, living each moment of the path (even the difficult ones) as if you had chosen it yourself (which, on a higher level, you did!).

For me, initiation is a symbol of this embrace. It is a jubilant acceptance of Tea as my Dao. It is a dedication which I greet with a steady gaze and an open heart.

As so many rituals do, initiation provides a formal pause to mark the path; a moment of reflection, a celebration of successes passed along the way and a steadying for challenges yet unmet. This is a flow of

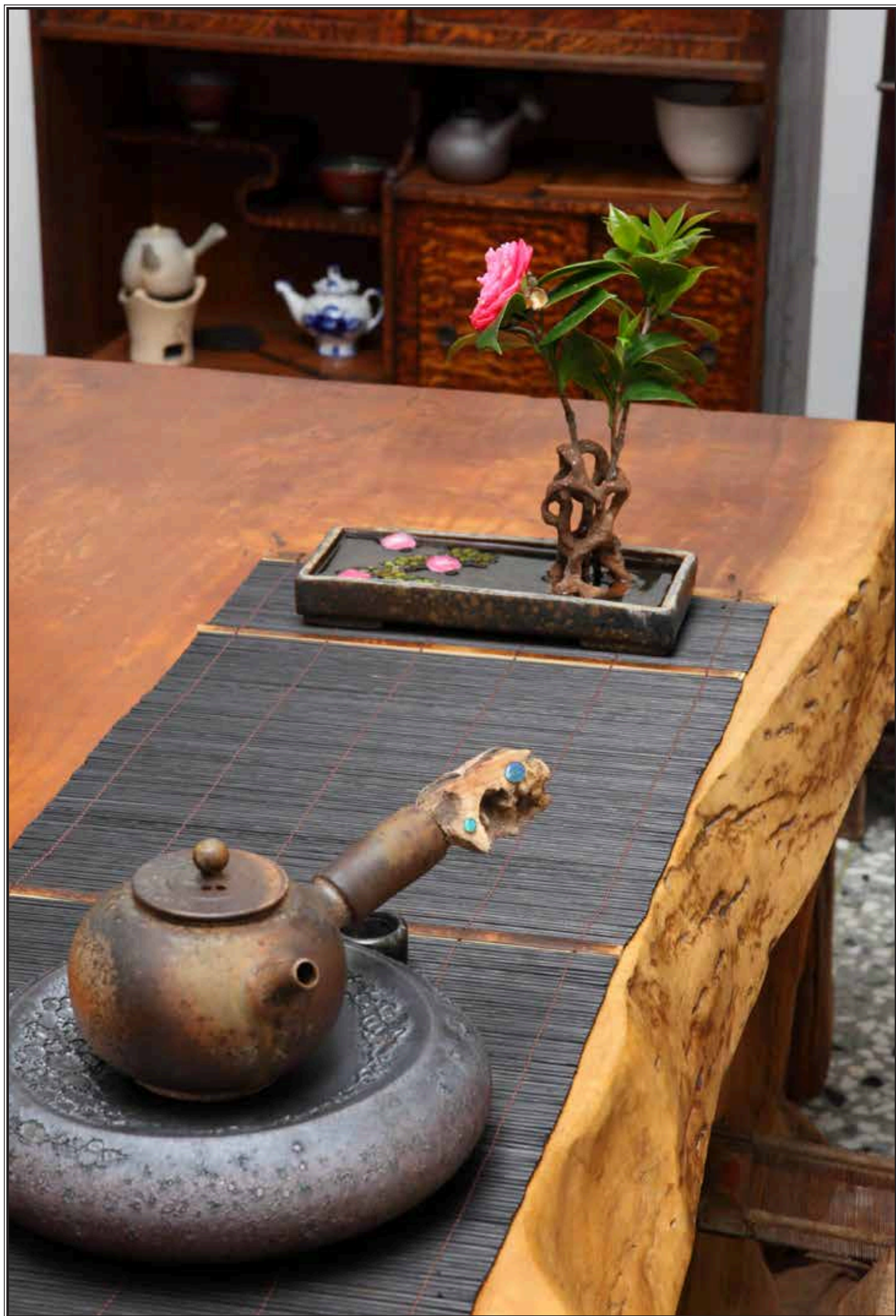
Initiation

energy from the tradition into me. But the opposite also occurs in this instant. Initiation is a framework for my heartfelt thanks to the tradition (including the many chajin who came before me) and to Tea for all they give me and all they give (and have yet to give) to others through me.

But all this talk of the deeper meanings of initiation leave behind the obvious truth in a ritual like this one: Initiation is a formal welcome into a community. What a gift! What a joy! (What a thing to save for the end!) I thank you all for being such integral parts of this Tea community—for being exactly who you are and for playing an enormous part in Global Tea Hut through your donations, visits, well-wishes and countless other contributions. I am honored to (officially) be your Tea sister. In the weeks leading up to you receiving this news-

letter, I'll be raising tea bowls and tea cups to all of you in thanks for your many roles in my path and in this tradition. It is my hope that your tea will be all the sweeter and your path will be all the clearer as a result of it!





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 gorgeous, smiling, effervescent Emily Hoda!

Hello Beloved Global Tea Hut! It is such an honor to introduce myself to you, my beloved brothers and sisters in tea. I had the privilege last month of being in Taiwan and arriving just in time to help send out last month's packages and see just how much loving care goes into each one.

I had been a student of the Leaf for about a year and half when Wu De visited LA for the first time. He served Greg's Galactivation Serum and I laughed with my friend for about a half hour after. I knew that ultimately the Truth and Light were being served in my bowl. I have spent my time since deepening my relationship to this beautiful plant and allowing Her to unfold Her mysteries to me.

I come from a land called Milford, Connecticut. It is about 90 minutes from New York City. When I was 18 I moved to New York City to study Massage Therapy and that's where I found my teacher, Dr. Levry, of Naam Yoga. Naam opened my heart and changed my life. About 2 years ago I moved to California to help open the new headquarters of Naam Yoga. I am blessed to be doing what I love, opening people's hearts through Naam Yoga and massaging all of the energetic blocks out. Currently, I am also a student of Traditional Chinese Medicine, studying at Emperor's College in Santa Monica. I honestly believe that my life before tea allowed me the ability to receive the heart message of tea so deeply. I am ever grateful to Alec Bridges, Colin Hudon and Wu De for introducing me to tea.

My life's work is now devoted to spreading healing through energetic body work and medicinal herbs, including tea. I hold regular tea tastings at my house for friends so they can experience the heart opening and sacred space that tea creates.

Since being back from The Tea Sage Hut, I have gained significant perspective on my life. Being at the

Hut I felt like I was visiting my extended family. Everyone was so loving and kind to me and I feel as though I have made life-long friends, and we have the best common interest in the world!

And that is why I am so humbled and honored to introduce myself to this world-wide community of Love and Light. I would like to be a beacon of Light and a source of inspiration to my fellow brothers and sisters of tea and look forward to eventually meeting each of you.



The Global Tea Hut website has a forum, 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 a great video series online now. There are many videos about this tradition, tea brewing, the center and Wu De's travels and work. They are all very inspiring to watch. 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 all the time so check back!



There are currently 150 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world: countries like Spain, Thailand, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. Our accountant, Kaiya the Magnificent (and Merciful) says that things are abundant nowadays so we should all 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. If you really, really require unregistered post, let us know...



Wu De' is planning a trip to Russia this summer. He will be doing workshops in both the east (Siberia) and the west (Moscow, St. Petersburg). We are also planning a bunch of events for this August in LA.



Baelyn Neff took precepts in this tradition, becoming the third person to cross such a threshold and devote their life to service in this tradition. Her tea name is "Tien Wu", which means "Heavenly Dance" and she is that indeed!



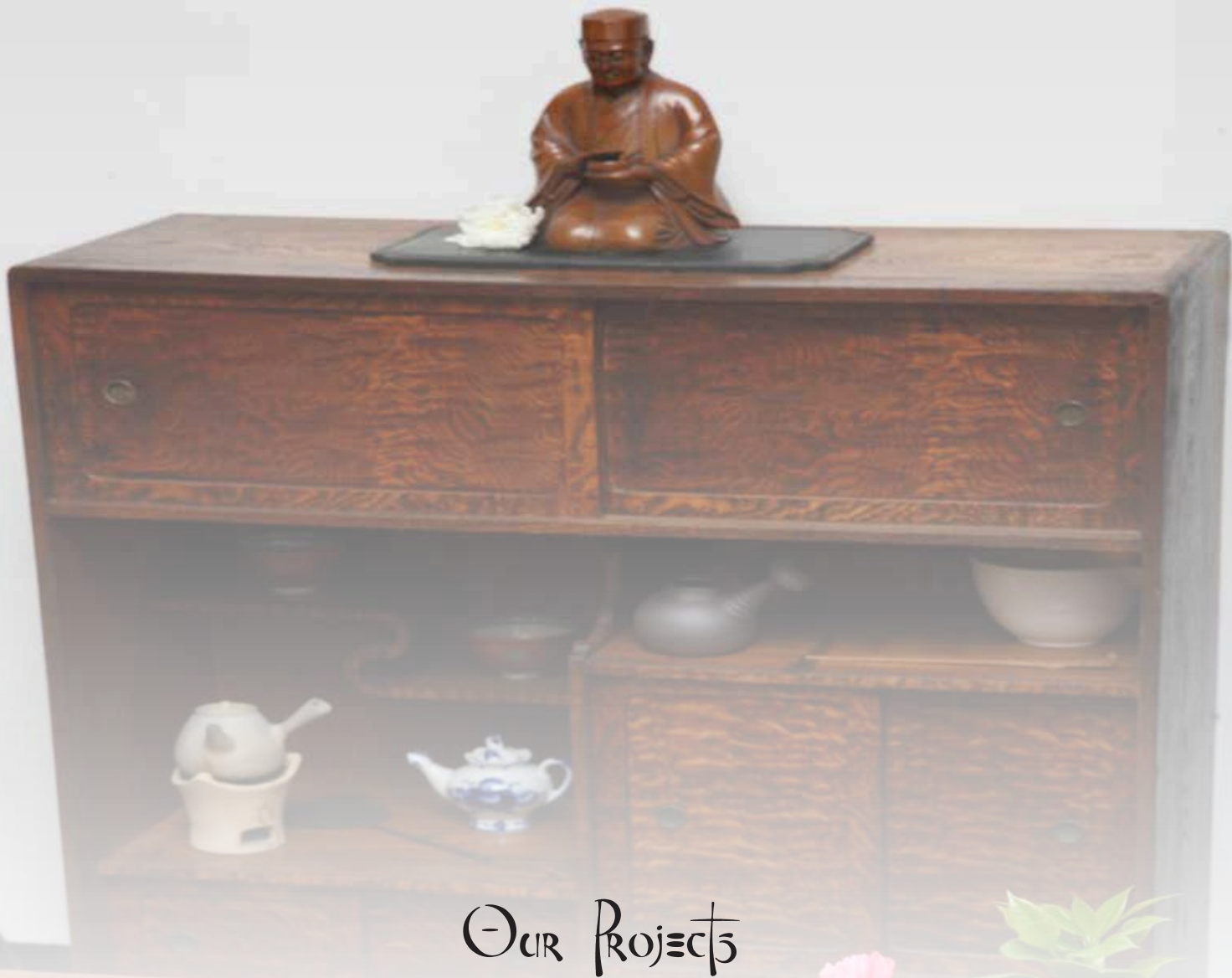
Let us know about what you think of Global Tea Hut so far, either by contacting us or expressing your thoughts on the new forum. We would love to hear your comments or criticism. We are here to serve and make this experience better for everyone, bringing us all closer together.

www.globalteahut.org

www.teasagehut.org

www.the-leaf.org

Be happy!



Our Projects

Our center (Tea Sage Hut)

- 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 (Light Meets Life)

- ~~Mountain land (We got it! Chek this one off)~~
- Building (we will need from between 1,000,000-2,000,000 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 alternative ways to better host/share our videos