



Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

October 2014

QI CULTIVATION

活力甦醒





QI CULTIVATION

We've devoted this issue to energy (Qi) and its relationship to Tea. We asked Wu De to gather some of his writings on Qi and Tea, combining them with articles written by other experts in our community. We hope that all these amazing insights will help guide your Tea journey, and facilitate a deeper appreciation of this magical Leaf we all adore!



LOVE IS
CHANGING THE WORLD
BOWL BY BOWL

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Letter from the Editor

In October, we enter the ninth “Chrysanthemum Moon” of the lunar calendar. The ninth day of the ninth moon is an important day to pay respects to our elders. Nine is an important number in the *I Ching*, and in Chinese it is also a homophone for the word “forever”—so doubling the nine is like doubling forever. This day signifies longevity, and a festival on this day dates back to the third century BCE. Traditionally, people drink chrysanthemum wine or tea and pay respect to their oldest living relative. They also wear dogwood leaves to dispel misfortune. This day might also include a trip to the temple to pray for longevity themselves. Many Chinese people go hiking on this day, appreciate the chrysanthemums and eat rice cakes, often reciting poetry that was written for the holiday.

One story of this holiday’s origin is about a legendary figure named Huan Jing. His parents died of the plague, so he traveled to Zhong Nan Shan to learn medicine and save others. While there, a Daoist immortal took pity on him and gave him a blue dragon sword that could dispel demons. The immortal said another plague demon would arrive on the ninth day of the ninth moon and urged him to gather the people of his village on a hill outside town, luring them with the promise of chrysanthemum wine. Huan Jing took the villagers outside town and gave them dogwood to protect them, though he himself stayed behind to combat the demon. He slayed the demon with his magic sword and was immediately a hero worth celebrating, then to now...

Around this time, it really begins to feel like Autumn in Taiwan. We start shifting more and more into aged oolongs, aged sheng puerh and the occasional shou puerh. The world starts to shift towards a more restive, Yin energy. The days grow shorter, but also lazier. Some tea farmers will have a Fall harvest. That happens once every five to ten years in Wuyi. In Yunnan, on the other hand, it is quite common to have a Spring and an Autumn harvest. The energies of these teas are very different. The Spring tea is vibrant and Yang, while the Autumn tea is usually softer, smoother and less potent. Sometimes Autumnal puerhs are amazing. It’s fun to drink a few at this time of year, as well. We find ourselves turning to Autumn teas from the previous year, though, as the age and rest makes the tea more suitable for the cooler weather here in Taiwan. Since it is so hot in the summertime, the coolness of Autumn is often a relief—a time to finally shut off the air-conditioning.

As you are reading this, I am in Spain conducting a retreat and several workshops on tea and Cha Dao. My heart is over-flowing with gratitude for all the meaning and purpose this community has brought to my own life,



and to the lives of everyone involved. Every single person in this community that I have met is amazing, and we’ve always bonded right away, which assures me that I can say I already love those of you I haven’t met as well!

We hope you notice the improvements in this magazine, as we seek to inform you more about tea and Cha Dao and to do so in the best way we can. Looking back at the magazine from January of this year to this, the tenth month, you can see such a dramatic improvement in the layout, pictures, articles and other content. We have been true to our word that as the community expands, we will utilize some of the growing energy towards improving this experience. And so many of you have also been true to yours, helping us to spread the word!

Let’s continue our effort to get a new member every month so that we can reach our goal. Not only does this result in a better magazine, more varied teas and articles, but it will also fund the construction of our new center, Light Meets Life. This is a unique project, as this experience supports a center that you can visit, learn about meditation and Cha Dao, as well as to retreat and gain perspective. And then, upon returning home, the magazine is more meaningful. Having visited here and met the authors, these pages will be more personal and heartfelt. We want to continue to encourage this movement from magazine to center and back to magazine, even now before we build our future center! A bowl always awaits you at the Tea Sage Hut...

SUMMER 2014

RED TEA

Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan

“Elevation” is the only tea we share annually in Global Tea Hut, and for good reason. It’s the tea we send home with every guest at the center. And there’s no better tea to accompany an issue devoted to Qi cultivation than this one, inspiring energy to rise!

茶道

It’s that time of the year again! The only tea we repeat every year; the return of the classic Sun Moon Lake red tea we’ve come to call “Elevation”. The tea for this month is one of our all-time favorite teas, and the one we send home with every traveler who stops at our center! You could say it’s our signature tea: the one we use to introduce new tea wayfarers to the path—the first wayside sign on the road. It’s also one of the teas we like to serve when we set up our roadside huts, serving tea to passersby.

Since this month’s issue is all about Qi cultivation through a tea practice, this is the perfect tea. Elevation is full of a bright and radiant Qi that moves with verve, making it easy to begin experiencing this aspect of tea appreciation. Later on in this issue, we’ll discuss some things you can do to prepare for an experience of the Qi in tea and in yourself, connecting to a meditative mind through this month’s tea session.

This amazing red tea is definitely a Living Tea, in all the ways we have been discussing in previous issues of these newsletters: It is seed-propagated, the trees have room and space to grow, there is a living relationship with the local ecology—undergrowth, plants, insects, ani-

mals, molds and bacteria—and there are, of course, no chemicals used in its production. The trees also have a healthy relationship with the people who care for them, achieving all five measures of Living Tea! (Check the box on the opposite page for the new sixth.) It shines with a bright and uplifting energy that makes it the perfect morning tea, radiating your day and filling it with “elevation”. It is simple and true, and you feel like you know it after your first bowl, as if a beloved friend from another lifetime returned.

As you may remember, there are two main varieties of tea: small leaf and big leaf. Originally, all tea comes from the forests in and around Southwest China: Yunnan, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Eastern India. The original trees were single-trunked, with large wide crowns that can grow several meters in height. The roots are also deep, extending down into the earth before branching. Then, as Tea traveled north and east—naturally or by human hands—it adapted to colder, sometimes higher, climates and terroir. These trees, called “small leaf”, developed to have several trunks, like a bush, with roots that extend outwards rather than down. The leaves got smaller and smaller as Tea pro-

gressed north into colder climes, until they get so small in places like Japan that, when they are rolled, they look like little needles (like *sencha* or *gyokuro*). Our tea of the month is a large leaf varietal, like puerh.

When the Japanese conquered Taiwan, they wanted to develop several long-term agricultural projects to help their economy. They brought many large-leaf trees and saplings, as well as seeds, from Eastern India to make red tea plantations, choosing Sun Moon Lake for its accessibility and for the way the terroir was similar to the original homes of these trees. Soon after, the Japanese were expelled and their gardens were abandoned.

In the coming decades, these semi-wild gardens would grow up and also produce completely wild offspring, as well as adapting and relating to the local terroir in all the amazing ways a tea tree can—through the soil, the insects, rain and minerals, sun and rock. Our tea comes from one such small, organic and ecological garden consisting primarily of semi-wild trees with some wild ones scattered throughout.

The farmer, Mr. Shu, is an amazing man. Many of his neighbors have utilized their gardens to create more industrial tea plantations



and get rich. He says he only wants enough to provide for his family, and therefore keeps it simple and organic. He has even bought up some nearby property so that he can control the proximity his trees have to anything harmful that others may be using. For that reason, the tea is incredibly clean and bright, speaking to its long heritage here in these mountains, and beyond to the older forests its ancestors once lived in at the foot of the great Himalayas.

Mr. Shu is a second-generation farmer with an incredible attitude. While his neighbors constructed new-and-improved houses with satellite dishes, he stayed humble, simple and in love with his work and trees. Last year, there was a drought compounded by pests that decimated the area—insects that come only every decade or so. When we talked to him about it, he responded with great wisdom, proving that—like the

ancient Daoist texts—even the simplest people can achieve harmony with the Dao, mastery of life and a great wisdom that we all can learn from. He said that at that time, he received less. If he were to stress about that, or worse yet compromise his values and turn to pesticides for help, it would be like rejecting his destiny, arguing with Heaven. Furthermore, he said that it would show how ungrateful he was for what Nature *had* given him. “We should be grateful for what Nature provides and accept the times that Heaven takes from us—learning from times of having less, or even losing what we have, as much as in times of abundance. We all will face

No Irrigation

Irrigation is an aspect of plantation tea that we don’t always discuss in relation to Living Tea. It is relevant, though. Living Tea is *not* irrigated. Some of Mr. Shu’s tea trees will wither as a result, but this is natural. They are a single spirit, and connected at the core. By not irrigating the trees, the output varies—in amount and quality. Every season will have a completely different flavor, aroma and Qi. This also requires more skill, as the farmer has to adapt their processing to suit the water content of the season’s leaves. If it rains less, for example, Mr. Shu will have to change the way he withers the tea and for how long.

Living Tea is not irrigated because that is the natural state of Tea. This makes Mr. Shu dependent on Nature, grateful for the rain. The most important aspect of this issue, though, is that the trees that are not irrigated will grow deeper and stronger roots, seeking the water deep down in the mountain. Encouraging the trees to grow deeper roots and to grow independently ensures their health and longevity. It also brings deep mountain Qi into the trees, changing the nature of the leaves as well. So let’s add a sixth characteristic to our list of what makes “Living Tea”: *no irrigation!*

lack and loss sooner or later. If you resist and argue with Heaven that your destiny is unfair, you don’t learn and there will be greater misfortune later. Better to accept whatever Nature gives us and be grateful for it. I have less this year, but it is okay because I saved when I had more

last year; and maybe next year I will have more again.” There couldn’t be deeper life lessons than these!

Once again, it is important to understand that what most Westerners call “black tea” is actually “red tea”. Ordinarily, it doesn’t matter what something is called, but in this case there is actually a problem, because there is another kind of Chinese tea that is called “black tea” (characterized by post-production, artificial fermentation). So if you call red tea “black tea”, then what do you call black tea? The reasons for this error are to do with the long distances tea once traveled in chests to

Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information for the first few hundred years tea was traded. Europeans weren’t allowed inland in those days, and never saw the tea trees nor the processing of the leaves. You could see how easy it would be to spread misinformation, buying tea through middlemen in broken pidgin.

We repeat this every time we send a red tea, because it is an important mistake that we tea lovers have to correct, so that the real black tea can have its name back!

Most red tea is processed in 3-4 phases: first it is picked and then

it is withered, traditionally on bamboo trays stacked on shelves built to hold them. The withering of red tea is very long, usually from twelve to twenty-four hours. It is then rolled for an exceptionally long time, to continue the oxidation and break down the cells. It literally turns into a pasty mass in the process. Then it is dried, usually in an oven. Our tea, however, is completely different. The farmers think we are crazy, but we ask them to decrease the withering and the rolling period, leaving some green in the leaves, which you will see when you brew them (essentially, we’ve asked that the tea be less oxi-



Caretaker of the Land

Mr. Shu has a deep love for Nature. All his farms are organic. He even purchased the adjacent lands, through years of saving, as he was concerned that the agricultural practices of his immediate neighbors would influence his own beloved tea.

Betel nut is a mild intoxicant sold throughout Asia. The tree is easy to grow, requiring little care, so many farmers plant it around their tea to supplement their income. This kind of palm is unhealthy and bad for the land, however, depleting the soil and causing landslides due to its root structure. It has a negative impact on the energy of the tea as well. Consequently, Mr. Shu has killed the betel trees that were on the neighbor’s land that he purchased to protect his own trees. The dead trunks are then invaded by grubs that quickly consume the pith of the betel trees. When split open, this will make a nice fertilizer for the tea trees.



Mrs. Shu happily picking this month's tea for you!

dized than that which is produced commercially). The reason for the complete oxidation in normal red tea processing is to make the tea sweet and delicious. Nevertheless, we have found that such extreme processing removes some of the tea's Qi, and distances it from the mountain and deep essence it touches. This is especially relevant when the tea leaves were plucked from old-growth, big leaf tea trees. The leaves of these large-leaf trees are often bitter and

astringent, but we can accept a bit of that along with the sweetness, can't we? And isn't that a significant life lesson as well? In the end, we'd rather have a slightly less delicious tea with incredible and relaxing Qi than the other way around.

Mr. Shu smiles and says he likes our quirkiness. We hope you will understand why we make our red tea like this. We don't produce it for sale, only for free. We only wish we could give it to you for less.

This year the tea was a bit more oxidized than usual, due to a lack of rainfall. Mr. Shu still decreased the withering and rolling for us, but not as much as in previous years. The raw tea leaves themselves were also more astringent, so a bit more oxidation was necessary. For these reasons, we stored the tea for a few months before sending it to you, allowing the flavors to mellow out and the Qi to become smoother and softer.

Brewing Tips for This Month's Tea

We recommend putting these leaves in a bowl, watching them unfold in the oldest brewing method around, older than the pyramids in fact! Elevation is the penultimate bowl tea! It often defines this brewing style, as so many of us started our tea journey drinking this very tea in this very way. It is a great morning tea, leaving you awake, bright and calm. Try waking up a bit earlier one morning, alone or with some loved ones. Put more or less leaves in your bowl, to your taste, and fill it with hot water. As it steeps, have a moment or two of

meditation. Then pass the bowl between you, sharing a single bowl as you share a single encounter, a single chance...

Try sitting cross-legged and putting a few leaves in a bowl. Sit and soak up the warmth and feel how it invigorates you. It has an incredible energy that calms and uplifts simultaneously. Try this for a few days and you will find that afterwards your outlook each morning is getting brighter and your life is starting to change—and all from a few leaves scattered in a bowl...



*Leaves and water
Subdue
Poison dragons of the mind.
Tamed,
These red-ribbon streaks
Carry me past Mt. Penglai,
Where the temple bells ring,
To a spot in the hills
Where I can be alone.*

—Wu De



An 80-year-old tree, one of many in this month's tea.

THE THREE TREASURES

Andrew Taylor

Chinese cosmology is defined by the three treasures of Jing (精), Qi (氣) and Shen (神). They have informed its rich culture, mythology, medicine and even everyday life for centuries. Andy introduces these three pivotal energies in a concise way that helps us relate to them.

茶氣

As you get to know more of Chinese culture, with its many rich traditions, beliefs, and practices, you discover that the principles on which it's all founded upon are not at all separate, but derive from the same root philosophy. The calligrapher and martial arts masters' movements both originate from the center, or *dan tien*; the farmer and fortune teller both use the lunar calendar to predict a harvest or an auspicious date for a wedding; and the soup at dinner and medicine from the Chinese doctor both contain ingredients to help strengthen the blood and benefit the eyes. And so many of these aspects of Chinese culture—from language and religion to tea, medicine, poetry, art and craftsmanship—all relate to the way of Heaven and Earth (Yin and Yang). The ancient Daoists believed Man to be between Heaven and Earth, as no dissociation exists in the mutual relationship between all three. That which is of Heaven and Earth, is also of Man. And so living within the Dao means living in harmony with Heaven and Earth energy.

Thus, sages were acutely aware of their energetic bodies and their lives were oriented towards cultivation and preservation of their energies. Ancient Chinese culture saw

health to be based on three special substances or energies, known as the “Three Treasures”, or “*san bao*” (三寶); Jing (精), Qi (氣) and Shen (神). These energies may be translated as “essence”, “vital energy” and “spirit-mind”, though they cannot be fully understood solely by English equivalents. Let's dive into these concepts, which date back to Lao Tzu and the Yellow Emperor...

*The Tao gives birth to One.
One gives birth to Two.
Two gives birth to Three.
Three gives birth to all things.*

—*Dao De Jing*

The First Treasure

The first treasure, Jing (essence, 精), is the original life force, the true Yang of life and root of our vitality. Early Chinese medical texts refer to Jing as the basis of the human body, constituting all of our blood and fluids. It is the material that fosters our body's development and sexual reproduction, as well as controlling our birth and growth, eventually waning as we age into death. In a broad sense, Jing gives our

body form and substance and connects us to our ancestral past through the genetic code. Of the Three Treasures, it's the one most closely related to our physical body, manifesting as semen in men and helping to create marrow in our bones.

In the Chinese medicinal paradigm, Jing is classified into two types: Our genetic code, given to us by our mother and father, and further back our ancestors' ancestors, is known as Pre-Heaven Jing (*xian tian zhi Jing*, 先天之精), literally the “Essence of Early Heaven”. This can be viewed as the stock that we are given as we enter this world. After birth, Post-Heaven Jing (*hou tian zhi Jing*, 後天之精) or “Essence of Later Heaven”, is the Jing that we will acquire ourselves, beginning at infancy, through intake of food and water.

At birth, our Jing determines the constitutional strength of the body, and a deficiency at an early age can be seen in slow growth or poor development of the brain, bones, teeth, structural deformities, and even mental retardation. In adults it manifests as impotence, lower back pain, deafness, and balding, thinning or graying of the hair. Ultimately, the



Leaves water and heat, the Jing, Qi & Shen of Tea

complete loss of Jing results in our death.

In Daoist traditions, conservation of Jing was practiced for health and longevity, and their lifestyle and daily practices were oriented as such. With its relationship to sexual function and the kidneys, reducing the frequency of sexual activities, or complete celibacy (especially in winter), was practiced as one such conservation technique. In modern times, Jing cultivation is often just a lifestyle that promotes well-being—one that includes adequate rest, a healthy diet in accordance with the seasons, meditation, yoga or Qigong. Chinese herbs also play an integral

part in nourishing Jing. The most common Jing herbs are cordyceps, the herb known as “*he shou wu*” (何首烏) and goji berries. Exhaustion of Jing, or “Jing depletion” as it is often called, is caused by stress, overwork, alcohol or drug intake, or excessive sexual activity.

The Second Treasure

Of the Three Treasures, Qi (氣), or “vital energy” is the one that is most familiar in the Western world. It is known as “*prana*” in Hindu culture. Qi is the invisible life force within everything and behind

all transformative processes of life. If Jing is the basis for the human body, Qi is the basis for the whole cosmos.

All movement and transformation within the Universe arises from Qi. It has many forms and functions and human life depends on its existence. We are continuously breathing Qi, eating Qi, and interacting with Qi in every moment of our lives. Our state of health depends on the condition of our Qi. Any lack or stagnation of it will cause imbalances in our body, creating dysfunction and dis-ease in the organ systems. If Qi is depleted, we must nourish it and if there is too much, it must be moved. The generation of Qi occurs

through the transformation of the air we breathe and the food we eat.

Within our bodies, Qi has five basic functions: activating, warming, protecting, transforming and containing, all of which relate to one another. Our Qi flows within our body through the meridian or channel system nearer to the surface of the body. This channel system, accessed through the exterior portion of our body, connects to our internal organ systems at the deeper level. (This explains how acupuncture affects bodily functions through insertion of needles into the body at particular points on the channel system.)

Our posture and body alignment influence the flow of Qi within the body. Fundamental to Taiji, Qigong and yoga practice is maintaining correct posture, which enables energetic movement. In this way, we can also examine our own alignment in life to that which surrounds us. Work, family, relationships, aspirations, spirituality,

all function and interact through Qi. Which aspects of our lives need nourishment? Which need to break through stagnation?

Like the differing energies of Yin and Yang, Qi can be great and expansive or condensed and subtle. The energetic difference is apparent when drinking an aged puerh as opposed to a fresh oolong, but do you notice the difference when moving the plant on your *chaxi* slightly closer to the edge? Or the shift in your energy when you change from wearing a blue shirt into a red one? Can you taste the difference of the Qi in food when eating organic as opposed to non-organic? Yes, Qi is everywhere!

One of the best ways to support Qi in the body is through diet and exercise. The Daoist concept of “*Yang Sheng*, (養生)” or “nourish life”, which means the cultivation and nurturing of our mind, body and spirit, is prevalent in Chinese society. This can be seen through-

out all aspects of everyday life here in Taiwan: at restaurants that offer healthy dishes cooked with Chinese herbs or early mornings in the park as the elderly move their Qi by doing Taiji, Qigong or other traditional breath/movement exercises. Another example of *Yang Sheng* occurs during the month after a woman gives birth. Childbirth results in an extreme loss of Qi and blood for a woman, so this time is of critical importance to replenish what was lost. The mother will rest for a month (called “*zuo yue zi*” or “sitting the month”), cared for by her own mother at home or at a special center by a caregiver, eating a traditional diet to nourish Qi and blood. Of course, herbs will be part of this regimen. The most commonly used Chinese herbs that strengthen the Qi to improve digestive, respiratory, immune function and help build blood include ginseng, astragalus root, schizandra and rhodiola.

The Third Treasure

Our first two Treasures join together within the body, developing into the third Treasure, Shen, (神) known as “spirit-mind”. This is the energy behind our mental, creative and spiritual being, our consciousness and awareness, and that which connects us to the Divine. If, as the Daoists say, the meeting point of Heaven and Earth is Man, then Earth energy is the source of Jing and Qi and Heaven energy is the source of our Shen. It resides in the heart and can be seen through the eyes—as the saying goes, “The eyes are the windows to the soul.” Unlike Jing and Qi, Shen does not get passed on from our ancestors. The Shen is developed ourselves, in our daily lives, cultivated through meditation, prayer, music, dance, tea, art, writing, or any creative activity that aligns us with a higher state of consciousness.



The state of our Shen is often determined by how we choose to orientate ourselves to the world. The way we relate to other people, or better yet, the way we relate to *everything* in this world creates a shift in our Shen. All thought, intention and interaction influences Shen, our spirit. Are you able to regard the mundane as sacred? Are you able to see the light when mired in darkness? For us *Chajin*, Tea acts as a medium to create space for a calm, peaceful spirit. However, that space is not limited to our tea room, and the equanimity felt from drinking Tea does not leave us after the pot has been cleaned. We continue to brew Tea throughout our day in regards to everything that we do, cultivating omnipresent, mindful and harmonious Shen.

How does Shen manifest in our physical body and how can we brighten it? Within Chinese Medicine, our Shen is associated with the heart organ. Anxiety, restlessness,

depression and heart palpitations can all be attributed to a clouded or disquieted Shen. To brighten the spirit, any activity that opens, moves, soothes and quiets the Heart is recommended. Finding your own Dao and living through that will certainly brighten Shen. In Daoism, reishi mushrooms are highly regarded as a superior Shen tonic for calming the heart and quieting the mind for meditation. And of course, we need look no further than the tea table to find the greatest Shen tonic of all!

With the wisdom passed down from the ancient wise ones, we are able to facilitate our own understanding and connection to Heaven and Earth. We are at the meeting point, and have access to the method and medicine to cultivate our own Three Treasures: Jing, Qi and Shen. Now it is up to you to live in harmony with Great Nature, nurture your own vitality and align your spirit with the Dao!



精 氣 神



PRESERVE THE HEAT

Wu De

Over the next few issues, we plan to delve into the poem that preserves our gongfu brewing methods, line by line. In this first episode, Wu De discusses the importance of heat in gongfu brewing and leaves us with some experiments to try.

茶道

Last month, we focused on the role the brewer plays in the session, learning how different tea becomes when it is brewed by different people. After exploring that understanding, we can again return to the practical aspects of tea preparation. Moving from the inner to the outer assures mastery, while the opposite is not always true. It is sometimes easy to get stuck in the outer form without grasping the inner, as with Tea it is also thus in life...

You should remember that everything in gongfu tea has an outer, practical function and an inner, spiritual principle governing each aspect as well—just like in martial arts, which it developed from. Much of the practical wisdom in gongfu tea has been lost through the ages, and much of the inner wisdom as well. We are fortunate to be a part of a tradition that has preserved both inner and outer teachings. Over time, as people have sought quicker and more convenient technology and ways of living, many traditions have been abandoned. First, the inner teachings and meanings are lost, and then—over time—the outer, practical truths are lost too. People stop experimenting, learning and growing through practice, and, instead, start choosing whatever is easiest and/or quickest.

In our tradition, the practice and way of gongfu tea is preserved in a poem:

*Preserve the heat and begin to absorb peace,
With slow, gentle and graceful movements
And a heart free of obstructions
Everything is finished in one breath.*

Over the coming four months, we thought we could discuss this poem a bit, line by line, starting with the first. There is a lot to unpack, and though we've practiced and worked with this poem for years, we haven't yet found its depth. It is a treasure trove of deep and lasting teachings, from how to pour gongfu tea to how to live.

The first line actually has to be broken into two months, so this time we will only be able to discuss the first part, "Preserve the heat". Heat is the conveyor of tea; it opens the leaves, extracts the essence and spreads it throughout our bodies. Without heat, a tea is weak and flat. Heat carries the energy of the tea (and the brewer, as you now know from last month's experiment) pushing it throughout our bodies as we drink. Try drinking the same tea at a hotter and cooler temperature; while the differences in taste might be interest-

ing, the tea doesn't move through the body the same. In fact, try allowing a cup of tea to cool down completely as you drink hot cups of the same tea and see how weak the Qi flows in comparison. This is why most all Chinese medicinal herbs are ideally drunk hot. For this reason, the first principal of gongfu tea is to preserve temperature from kettle to guest. And that's not easy at all.

Heat stabilizes the art and alchemy of tea, making the movement of energy (Qi) from kettle to drinker as smooth as possible. The heat awakens the water, which starts a tea ceremony. Around here, tea time always starts with the laying of charcoal. Heat begins the dance. And it is through heat that the energy within the leaves is stirred to life as well, awakening them from their sleep. Over time, in every step of the process, a tea brewer learns the value of heat.



We use a variety of charcoal at the center, but mostly coconut husk because it is convenient to arrange and easy for students to learn.



Fine teas always respond to higher heat, though you can sometimes produce a different kind of tea when brewing light teas at a lower temperature. If a green, white or yellow tea is of fine quality, however, it will not be ruined by hot water. That is a generalization. What happens, actually, is that a different kind of experience is evoked. In other words, it is a lateral rather than vertical shift when brewing a fine green tea with hot or cooled-down water. While it may be good advice for a beginner to brew white, green or yellow teas at lower temperatures, such instructions are not always based on personal wisdom or experience. And no general principle is true all of the time. There

are always exceptions. If you have a fine green tea, try brewing it with hot water and cooler water. What are the differences? Is one better or just different? If the tea is low quality, then of course the cooler brew will be better as less is extracted (and less of a rough tea is less rough).

Upon arriving at our center, guests often feel the tea is too hot, as we use charcoal to heat our water. But within a few days, they begin to appreciate that when brewing most fine teas, the hotter the better. More heat means more Qi, more essence—more Tea! Most tea lovers will begin to gravitate towards hotter tea over time, especially if they are brewing tea gongfu.

For this month, try taking two of the same cups and preheating one before you pour tea liquor into both. The exercise is simple: preheat one cup with hot water before each steeping and don't preheat the other. Then drink them back and forth quickly, rather than trying to finish the whole of each cup consecutively. Just like in other experiments, and with all these gongfu tea tips, it is better if you use a tea that you are very familiar with. Otherwise, the newness of the tea will impair your ability to distinguish between the two. Also, brew the tea a bit lighter than you usually do. We hope these experiments can help you to begin to appreciate the value of heat in your tea and life...



UNDERSTANDING CHA QI, PART I

Wu De

A Tea lover should be able to understand and feel Qi, as an aspect of cultivation and enjoyment of the Leaf. There are sensations and energies in Tea that cannot be explained through chemistry. These subtleties are the gateways to a deeper relationship with Tea.

茶氣

Any discussion of the Daoist world view must include an understanding of Qi (氣). Like the Dao, however, Qi is a very difficult word to translate or understand without experiencing it. It is the life force that moves and breathes through all things. One might translate “Qi” as “energy”, “flow” or even “breath”, but actually it involves much more than that. It is, in fact, similar to the Indian word “*prana*”, which also refers to the vital life energy of living beings, as well as the energies that move the material Universe. As this ethereal substance sustains the body, it can also be thought to sustain the mind. Consequently, its ability to be felt by body and mind, and the fact that it also flows through the Universe outside us, has made this energy the focus of countless methods of meditation throughout time. On the other hand, one need not assume that it refers to anything mystical or magical. Qi can be viewed simply as the movement or vibration of the subatomic particles of which all things are formed—the matter of the universe itself.

Western scientists have also found that the world is actually composed of atoms that are all vibrating, as the subatomic particles within rotate at incredible velocity, existing

as both particles and waves. All matter is, in fact, energy (Qi), and is in a constant state of motion. By feeling this vibration as it also flows within us, we find a Way to experience a concordance with the Universe. In essence, Qi is the way that we can find a connection to the Dao, and the insights that harmony affords us.

As the word “Qi” has been used in so many ways throughout Chinese history, its meeting with the Western mind and philosophy often causes confusion about whether the Qi is within matter, causes matter or results from matter. In fact, arguing about the deeper meanings of Qi has been a part of Chinese scholarship for centuries, so it shouldn’t come as any surprise that Western notions of “energy” would only complicate things. However, I feel that Qi can only be disputed when it is treated as a concept or philosophy, rather than an experiential sensation that people may feel within their own bodies and minds.

It is important that one approaches Qi not as a concept or some form of dogma related to a certain religious view. Qi is an actual, physical sensation that can be felt in the body. It is concrete and tangible. And it is not really important how one goes about explaining what it

is, as long as one is able to feel and connect to the actual sensations of Qi “flowing” through one’s body and mind. Of course, the movement of all Qi in the Universe is a much larger concept and true connection with that great energy is a very high state, indeed. On the ultimate level, Qi is much more than the subtle sensations that we feel in our bodies. It is the substantial movement of the entire Universe, well beyond—yet including—human experience, sensory or otherwise. Nevertheless, the subtle sensations of Qi that we experience are the Way that we as human beings can relate to the energy of the Universe; and as such our focus, experientially, should remain there. Without experiential, living wisdom of what it is like to feel/be the Qi moving through us, with the Dao, these ideas remain just words or concepts for articles like these; and without developing the sensitivity to actually experience Qi, aware that it is our very self, harmony with the Dao would be nigh impossible.

Through self-awareness, based perhaps on instinct or maybe intuition, but usually on a practice, one may begin to feel the Qi within the body and mind. This is often achieved through some method like Taiji, Qigong, yoga or meditation.



Since ancient times, Tea sages have also known and discussed the Qi of Tea, and “Cha Qi” has always been a part of the appreciation of the Leaf. When we drink Tea, the Cha Qi moves through our bodies, becoming the focal point for self-awareness, and Tea as a Dao.

However, it is hard to say whether the Qi is already in us, and the Tea only inspires it to begin moving, flowing, or if it is in the Tea. Maybe it is both. However it occurs, there is definitely a very real experience of Qi in Tea. One might think of it as a sort of dialogue going on inside the body between the soul and the Tea. But it is important to remember that once you drink a Tea, it becomes you. It is *your* Qi, *your* body. *You are Tea*, in other words!

Different Teas produce different kinds of Qi. Often the flow of the Qi changes direction, moves quickly or impulsively, or encircles

the body. Sometimes the Qi stays on the surface; other times it’s deep inside. And sometimes there isn’t any Qi at all, or it is perhaps too subtle for us to feel. Many times natural, organic or Living Teas have a Qi that slowly rises throughout the duration of a Tea session: The first few steepings are devoid of feeling, but then ever so slowly the Qi will begin to flow through the body, and may be felt as vibrations, tingling or other subtle sensations.

My first encounters with Qi came through practicing meditation, not through drinking Tea. My Teacher instructs us to use breathing exercises to calm the mind down, stopping the internal dialogue to

To Honor Tea

You may have noticed that in this, and other issues of Global Tea Hut, we sometimes capitalize “Tea”. In this issue on Qi cultivation, you may find this trend more pronounced. We do this to honor Tea as a plant spirit, an entheogen. Entheogens are plant medicines used by shamans to lead to an experience of the Divine. For thousands and thousands of years before it was ever a commodity, Tea was a plant medicine—a “She” that people worked with as a spiritual elixir. It’s time we returned some of that to our modern world. We aren’t suggesting a return to olden times or ideas, some of which may be overly superstitious, but rather that more reverence for the Leaf is worthwhile, and we can start that process with the language we use to talk about Tea.

When we speak about Tea as a Her, it isn’t meant to evoke gender—or even to anthropomorphize Tea—but rather to show respect. “It” doesn’t feel as nice, and from boats to guitars, we all inherently know that, and respect the things we love accordingly! Nothing could benefit us all more than a bit more respect for the living beings that share this world with us, including our plant relatives!

create a tranquil base of heightened concentration. Then, when the mind is quiet enough, we begin learning to focus on the sensations in our bodies. The idea is that every single part of the body has some sensation, and if we concentrate our minds on our small toe, for example, we can feel it. Slowly, as we practice for days, weeks or even years feeling all the gross sensations in each part of our

body, inside and out, we begin to feel subtler and subtler sensations, until finally we begin to feel a kind of “flow” of tingling vibrations. We learn to move this flow, “sweeping” it up and down the body in waves of energy. What initially attracted me to this kind of meditation was the fact that I could *actually feel* what the Teacher was discussing. Previously, I had practiced many forms of meditation that involved different kinds of imagination, verbalization and/or contemplation, all taking place primarily within the mind. This was a far more concrete experience, as I was feeling it in my body—and the calmness, equanimity and wisdom that followed were that much more pronounced to me. A more ‘bodily’ meditation that kept the intellect at a distance was far better medicine for me. As the years passed and my relationship with Tea developed, I came to understand that what I had been feeling was Qi. This prepared me to be more sensitive to Cha Qi, recognizing the changes that occur in my body on the subtlest level when I drink different Teas.

Approaching Cha Qi


Most Tea-lovers these days pay much more attention to the fragrance, liquor, flavor and sensations in the mouth and throat that their Teas offer. Maybe some feel that the idea of Qi is too abstract or perhaps beyond the experience of an average person. In the beginning, when one first starts enjoying Tea, one may have reservations about Qi. Is it some kind of mystical force or religious experience involving faith? Perhaps someone will tell them of the upward movement of some kinds of Qi, ultimately reaching the back of the head in an explosion of bliss called “*Qi da bai hui* (氣達百會)”, and they will find the idea farfetched. Even intellectually the words seem too intangible to understand. However, I have found that if one follows

some guidelines when approaching a Tea session, almost anyone can eventually begin to feel Qi in their body. And that ability becomes paramount in every aspect of Cha Dao, from finding the best Tea leaves, water and Teaware to the way that we prepare our Tea, imbuing the Tea ceremony with Qi that makes those there feel calm and joyous.

In these many issues of Global Tea Hut, we have discussed the ways in which aged teas are better than new, mountain water better than bottled water and antique teaware better than its modern equivalent—and all this has to do, ultimately, with Qi. As I mentioned in last month’s Puerh Edition, many teachers say that the very expensive, old teas are only worth such high prices in terms of their Qi. If one is just seeking nice flavors in the mouth, there are many foods and candies that can provide such sensations for a fraction of the cost.

The best water, from the place where the spring starts moving, as we’ve also discussed, is that much better because it enhances the Qi of the Tea liquor. And anyone who has ever experimented with using different kinds of teaware to gauge the effects they have on Qi can testify to the fact that most antique teaware enhances the experience of the Qi in gongfu Tea. Moreover, last month’s *Gongfu Tea Tips* discussed the importance of the brewer in the Tea ceremony, and we gave you an experiment to verify that the Tea does, in fact, change when we switch brewers. At that time, we said that the brewer drastically influences the Tea. Well, that too was in relation to the Qi that each brewer brings to the Tea ceremony. Of course the “energy” of the one handling the kettle, Teapot, leaves and cups will influence the Qi of the liquor, as the entire ceremony is flowing through them.

Qi is therefore at the very core of an understanding of Cha Dao, and without it I think Tea would never have been recognized by all



the sages and seers throughout time, and never inspired a center such as this. By learning to become sensitive to the way that Tea affects the Qi in our bodies, we develop self-awareness through introversion, quietude, peace, tranquility and equanimity. Beyond just the simplicity and Zen-like clarity of being present, absorbed and aware of a moment of Tea—beyond that, the Qi connects us to the energy and movement of the entire Universe, the Dao.

What Cha Qi is not

Sometimes when a concept or experience is difficult to explain or share with others, as is definitely true with Qi, it helps to eliminate some



of the factors surrounding one's focus to help illuminate the obscurity. When practicing meditation in my tradition, for example, the Teacher often reminds us to always try to sublimate gross sensations, dissecting them to find the subtler components that make them up—until we reach the subtlest flow of vibrations, felt as a kind of tingling movement, Qi. Nonetheless, even those that are not trained to feel the subtler sensations that come with the flow of Qi within us will still be affected by it. After all, the atoms of the world are vibrating with energy regardless of whether

we are aware of it, and as such our bodies are vibrating and changing all the time whether we are sensitive to it or not. Unfortunately, many human beings have lost their intuition and sensitivity because modern civilization is too focused on external stimuli. Often times, people will just feel a general sense of ease or comfort when drinking fine teas.

When we drink Tea, the Qi within our bodies begins to flow in various ways. Because of poor health, diet or even posture many of us will at times, or even often, have blockages that will hinder the movement of Qi. Breaking through these obstructions often results in some kind of gross sensation or even emotional upris-

ing in us. Besides these obstacles to the flow of Qi, Tea drinking itself also results in grosser sensations, of course. Drinking Tea may produce gross sensations like heat, perspiration or palpitation. Any of these sensations are either the effect of the Qi breaking through blockages or perhaps the nature of our Tea leaves, maybe the caffeine even. *These gross sensations should not be confused with Qi itself.*

It can't be stressed enough that Qi is *not* a synonym for caffeine; it is *not* a heightened sense of hyperactivity, a warmth in the chest; it is *not* sweating or heat—all of these are either the *effects* of the Qi as it moves through us, or perhaps merely characteristics of the Tea itself. Some are also the side effects of breaking through blockages. Actually, the best teas—like very old puerh teas for example—will not keep us awake at all. Quite the opposite, in fact. Really great teas will calm us down to the point that we often sleep better, longer and deeper after drinking them. I can't tell you how many times I have heard someone mention how surprised they were to find that they slept so well and comfortably after a long session with some fine Tea.

By ruling out all the gross sensations that come as effects of the Qi or tea itself, one can begin to concentrate on finding the sensation of the Cha Qi, for it *is* there. Qi is not an illusory concept in the mind, a belief or a philosophy. It is an actual sensation and can be felt in the body, if one but learns how to listen. Of course, finding the words to describe that sensation is very difficult, and subjective. To me it feels almost like a tickly, tingling, prickly kind of flow when it is on the surface. Almost like, yet also different from, a feeling of goose bumps when one is frightened. Other times, when the Qi is deep and penetrative it feels almost cloud-like, puffy and one's body feels very light. In those instances the "wavelength" (for lack of a better word) of the vibrations seems too narrow (changing quickly) to be

what I would call “tingly”, and the sensation is more akin to numbness.

Alas, no turn of phrase or curl of the brush, no matter how skilled the calligrapher, could ever really capture the essence of experiencing Qi. We have, however, had several guests from all over the world that were able to begin feeling Qi after practicing for a bit. I have also witnessed several seminars in which hundreds of people attended, many very skeptical, who then went on to describe similar sensations and experiences. I remember an American friend who had already been a Tea drinker for a few years when he came to visit. By following some of the guidelines suggested for learning to approach Qi, he was, at the end of a week or so, experiencing it himself. He told me later that he had used the words “Cha Qi” in Tea reviews and discussions prior to this, but hadn’t

really ever experienced it—confusing it for a caffeine rush or the warmth in his chest as the hot liquid went down. He was very excited that he now had the ability to discuss Qi in the way it was meant to be, the way it was approached even in ancient times.

Qi and Health

Since ancient times, Chinese medicine has focused on the movement of Qi and stipulated that illnesses are often caused by the obstruction of this flow in a certain portion of the body. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), most all illnesses stem from stagnation.

Acupuncture is a healing technique meant to release these blockages. The fact that Cha Qi can also pass through the body so fluently

means that it too has a similar healing power. Thus by appreciating good Tea in quiet, one is in effect cleansing the body, making it a proper vessel through which Qi flows. Tea helps in digestion, blood circulation and has several other health benefits known to Chinese doctors for thousands of years, and the way it causes our Qi to flow is just one more of its beneficial qualities. Beyond just meditation, serenity or calm joy, this flow of Qi is healthy for the body and spirit, relaxing us, washing away stress—both bodily and mentally. The movement of Qi opens us up and allows us to experience ourselves as a part of this Universe.

The earliest theoretical treatise on Chinese medicine was in the form of a dialogue between the emperor and the sage Qi Bo, called “The Yellow Emperor’s Classics of Inner Wisdom” (*Huang Di Neijing*). In this book the emperor asks the sage about the meaning of the word “Qi” and he describes it simply as a measurement of time equal to 15 of the 360 degrees that the Earth must travel in a year. The king doesn’t really understand the connection between this seemingly mundane measurement and all the esoteric Daoist knowledge hidden within the word “Qi”. What the sage was in essence saying was that the rhythmic changes in the cycle of the Earth are connected to all things in the Universe, that this word “Qi” was that very flow of change itself, and understanding it was to understand Nature, agriculture, society and even personal health, holistically. At that time, astronomy and astrology weren’t curious classes taken as requisites for other majors, but central to the life of such masters living out in the mountains, closer to the stars than we could imagine. Qi Bo was telling the emperor to look to Nature: the rhythms of the Earth and the Heavens for an answer to the movement of Qi. Without an experiential understanding of this change, however, this intellectual clarity is of



茶中之氣



There's a lot of Taiji practiced in the parks near the center every morning.

little use, and I doubt the emperor was any less confused for asking, though such was the Way of those ancient sages. We must find a way to connect more fundamentally to this inner melody, *being* the Dao rather than discussing it. We are the 15 of 360 degrees!

Like the journey we take within ourselves, finding subtler and subtler aspects of experience and connection to the Dao, the whole Way itself is one of transcendence—constantly sublimating reality to find deeper and deeper aspects of existence. At first Tea is sensual, connecting us with pleasure, enjoyment of flavor and aroma. Then we begin to feel the Qi, the bliss inviting us to explore ourselves deeper until we find the empty place where our flow is the flow of the Universe, the Dao.

The connection that we can achieve and maintain through Tea

is an understanding that there really is no difference between the various aspects of the Universe, in the sense that they are all facets of the same totality, the Dao. Qi is the movement of this totality. For us, we use our bodies and minds as objects of focus, becoming aware of the present moment as it is experienced, lived. The feeling of Qi connects us to the energy as it flows through us, moving in and out like the breath that also connects us all to each other, to the world. Shunryu Suzuki once said, “‘You’ means to be aware of the Universe in the form of you, and ‘I’ means to be aware of it in the form of I. You and I are just swinging doors. This kind of understanding is necessary. This should not even be called understanding; it is actually the true experience of life through Zen practice”, succinctly capturing the Way that our experience can dissolve the

sense of separation that we often create between ourselves, others and the Dao. The currents of energy within us are the flow of atoms that began long ago, and every bit of our experience of them is within that great current, starting with the explosion in which the very stars themselves were strewn across the sky. We connect and become that flow, the Dao.

Through focusing on our bodies and walking through this arched gateway to the Universe beyond, we may return to a time before all of the external stimuli of televisions and computers—a time when people knew themselves better. By drinking Tea in quiet and focusing on the flow of Qi we can return to our souls, riding the windy currents within ourselves to the “abode of the immortals” Lu Tong spoke of in his most famous of Tea poems.



THE SEVEN BOWLS OF LU TONG

Wu De

Lu Tong's famous Tea poem has been recited at Tea parties, shared amongst friends and even carved on Tea jars and pots for millennia. It resounds with a deep and timeless Tea spirit, celebrating Tea's ability to inspire us to soar. Through drinking Tea, we find our wings and raise them on a wind that blows towards the poetic heart waxing within.

茶道

Lu Tong was a tea sage of the Tang Dynasty, born near the end of the eighth century of our era. Little is known of his life, other than that he declined an offer to be a provincial officer, preferring a quiet life of renunciation and Tea. He lived a secluded life somewhere in the mountains of Hunan Province, writing poems under the name "Master Jade Spring". His poems oh-so-elegantly wrap around the Way, capturing all the beauty and serenity found in a life of Tea. And though his life took its course without any history or much story to speak of, other than his tragic death, I often find that my affinity to him is greater than other more renowned tea masters. His poems clearly demonstrate his presence and understanding of the power Tea has to help us live more natural, complete lives. His tea poetry especially deals with the Qi of Tea in a profound way, which we can explore in this issue. The artist and poet in me is also moved by the elegance of his writing, as it stirs my soul and makes me yearn in my heart for the next trip to the tea room.

Lu Tong also studied Daoism, growing up on one of China's

most sacred mountains. Though he was married and had children, he still lived a life of leisure withdrawn from the world. His poetry and lifestyle, however, attracted the attention of some officials and it would seem that the tea sage himself kept up these relations in exchange for the high-quality teas they offered him. He was even given some Imperial Tribute Tea, which was priceless and unavailable except by gift from the Dragon Throne. A government official and friend sent some to Lu Tong, inspiring his most famous poem, the *Song of Tea*, or *The Seven Bowls of Tea*. The most famous and inspirational part is:

*The first cup moistens the throat;
The second shatters all feelings of solitude;
The third cup purifies the digestion,
re-opening the five thousand volumes I've studied
and bringing them to mind afresh;
The fourth induces perspiration,
evaporating all of life's trials and tribulations;
With the fifth cup, the body sharpens, crisp;
The sixth cup is the first step on the road to enlightenment;
And the seventh cup sits steaming—
it needn't be drunk, as one is lifted to the abode of the immortals.*

It is difficult to translate the depth and perspective of Lu Tong's poem and one is better served by reading several versions. In this poem, he elucidates the effects Tea has, slowly rising from a physical sensation, to one of comfort and warmth—like the company of a true friend—and then on to the communion with the universal energy, the Qi, and all the Heavenly transcendence of those final draughts.

The poem naturally moves from the physical to the spiritual. It starts with the comfort of Tea on the most surface level, coating the throat and bringing satisfaction in drinking. The second cup moves to the emotions, satisfying the heart with the

Here and Now of this moment. The third brings actual, living, experiential truth to what was before only studied by the intellect. The fourth purifies the body, as the Qi begins to rise. With the fifth cup, the whole body is felt in the flow of subtle body sensations. After the sixth cup, we begin to transcend and no more is needed. Other translations have the Qi rising up, sweeping out iniquities—sometimes from under the arms, in the seventh bowl, raising them like wings to sore to the land of the immortals.

Of course, this is just one, mild interpretation of the poem. There are many, many ways to translate and/or understand this great tea poem, and a lifetime of tea drinking would better express it (or even a single bowl). Each of us should read many translations, and find our own meaning and Truth in Lu Tong's timeless words.

Unfortunately, Lu Tong lost his life while visiting the capital. The emperor plotted to remove some of the eunuchs that were manipulating the throne. He sent them out of the inner palace to collect some dew from an important tree, believing it to grant longevity to those who drank some. Assassins waited for them in the grove. The eunuchs, however, realized the plot and fled back into the palace. They called in the army, and the emperor went along with their investigation in order to feign innocence. They ransacked the city and executed many officials, even without convincing evidence. No doubt, they used this as an excuse to get rid of some of their own political barriers. Unfortunately, Lu Tong was visiting the very same official who had sent him the tea that had inspired his poem. The soldiers captured the official and his household, including the guest. Years earlier, Lu Tong had written a satirical poem that mocked the court eunuchs, and they hadn't forgotten. He was beheaded and buried in a humble grave, his children orphaned.

There may not be a colossal gravestone commemorating him, and even much of his poetry has drifted

into obscurity, but there hasn't been a tea lover since his time that hasn't learned, and often memorized, some of his poems. The above poem captures all of what tea is about: mindfulness, reverence and withdrawal from worldly concerns.

The first time I saw one of Lu Tong's poems, it was inscribed upon a Qing Dynasty jar for tea storage. While others were busy drinking tea, I found myself revolving the jar over and again, trying to comprehend the meaning of these words. I found myself imagining this man on some mountain—images of Wuyi dancing

in my head—brewing his teas and writing his poems with brush and ink. I imagined the vivacity his calligraphy must have had after such seemingly powerful tea sessions. When I returned to the table that day, my tea tasted that much sweeter...



*To honor my Tea,
I shut my wooden gate,
Lest worldly people intrude,
And donning my silken cap,
I brew and taste my Tea
alone.*

—Lu Tong



CHA DAO & QIGONG

Solala Towler

Diet and Movement are parts of the Eight Bowls we practice in a life of Tea. How the Qi circulates through your body definitely influences your Tea brewing, especially gongfu Tea. Here, Solala teaches us a simple Qi Gong exercise for Tea practitioners.

茶氣

The Way of Tea, and the Way of Qigong are actually very similar. For followers of the Cha Dao, Tea is a way to connect with the depths of our being and our relationship to Source, to Dao. When we sit at the tea table, if brewing gongfu tea, or just with a bowl of steaming, tea-infused water, we are aligning ourselves with all the masters and students of Tea down through the generations.

Drinking tea with others in a state of joyful sharing and meditation can be a very healing and uplifting experience. Another way to experience this flow of energy between us and Dao is the practice of Qigong.

The term Qigong means “working/playing with Qi or vital life force.” There are literally hundreds of styles of Qigong, with new ones being created all the time. The one we will be featuring here is from Wudang Mountain, which has been sacred to the Daoists for thousands of years.

We are surrounded by a sea of Qi at all times. Living beings, including humans, animals, trees, water and even stones, all have/are Qi. The art of Qigong is to access the Qi that surrounds us and bring it into our bodies, circulating and finally storing it there.

The problem many of us have is that we have shut down our Qi body for various reasons such as stress, emotional turmoil, toxic environments, etc. What happens when we shut down our Qi body is that we get sick or injured. Our Qi travels in special pathways throughout our bodies, called meridians in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Qigong healers, as well as acupuncturists, use these meridians as well as very specific points on those meridians to open up the pathways in our body so that the Qi can flow more smoothly and strongly. Qigong can free up stuck Qi so that it can move more freely throughout our system.

The Qigong we will be learning here is called “Great Spiraling Dragon Qigong”. Here we are using the image of the spiraling dragon to pull healing Qi from the moon, sun, the deep sea, the Earth and the Heavens. The movements are all done very slowly and gracefully...

Begin with your feet as wide apart as your shoulders. Stand with your spine straight and your weight evenly spread on your feet, hands down to your sides. With your mind, send roots down into the Earth, at least three times the length of your body. This will stabilize you and allow you to pull healing energy up

into your body from deep in the Earth. At the balls of our feet is a point called “Bubbling Wells”, which is the beginning of the kidney channel. You can also energetically open your *bai hui* or crown chakra at this time to receive healing Yang energy from the sun and stars.

To begin, raise your hands, palms up, to the level of your waist. Palms come forward a little bit. Then do a mid-sized circle out to your sides and over your head. This is called Embracing the Moon. The moon is considered a strong Yin influence. Picture a bright full moon filling your body with the cool Yin energy. Then do a larger circle to Embrace the Sun. The sun is considered to be strong Yang. Feel the warm healing energy of the sun entering your body.

After Embracing the Sun, let your arms come down to your sides. Then, bring energy up from the Earth through the bottoms of your feet up to your hands. Raise your hands to waist level, fingers pointing in, charging up your Belt Channel, a very important pathway of Qi that circles your waist. Let your hands go around your waist to your lower back and then come together, palm over palm, resting on the point in your lower back called “*ming men*”. The *ming men* is called the “Gate of Vital

Force” and is a very important point that is related to the Lower *dan tien* (Field of Elixir), located in the lower abdomen. This is the energetic foundation of our bodies. (There are two more *dan tien*, the Middle *dan tien*, located in our heart center, and the Upper *dan tien*, located in our third eye area.)

Send Qi from your palms into your *ming men* point for at least three deep breaths. Then bring your hands back to the front and Embrace the Moon as before, followed by Embrace the Sun, hands coming down to your sides again.

Again draw energy from the Earth up from the bottom of your feet into your hands and pull them gently up and form a Lotus Flower in front of your Upper *dan tien* (third eye). Look into the lotus flower, breathing in the wonderful fragrance for at least three deep, slow breaths. Now, your hands go up over your head as they glide back and forth as the Dragon Ascends to Heaven with its tail whipping back and forth.

Stretch your hands over your head, giving your spine a good stretch. With your palms facing up, gather star and sun Qi into your palms for three deep breaths. Turn your palms over and allow the star and sun Qi to flow down through the top of your head (*bai hui* point) down into your body, filling it with healing light. Turn your palms up again and gather more Qi and then turn them over once more to allow the Qi to flow into your body.

Next, the Dragon Descends to the Bottom of the Sea. Your palms come down along the sides of your head, neck, chest and down the outside your legs to your feet. Palms circle around your feet and come up the insides of your legs up to your lower abdomen. The palms then come up and rest on the lower *dan tien*, palm over palm. For women the left palm is on the top and for men the right palm is on top.

Now do the Embrace the Moon one more time. Pivot your body to the right, with weight on right leg, left palm up and right palm behind you facing down. Take three

deep breaths, then pivot to the left with right palm up and left palm down. Pivot to the right one more time and then to the left one more time.

Do one more big Embracing the Sun, ending with the palms over the lower *dan tien*. Take nine deep slow breaths to allow the Qi to flow throughout your whole body. Finish by circling your palms over your lower *dan tien*, sealing the Qi you have gathered from the Earth, the

moon, the sun and stars there. Do this nine times counter clockwise followed by nine times clockwise.

You can watch a nice little video of a teacher in Wudang Mountain leading his students through this form:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sdw-QEI7OU4>

If you have more questions feel free to contact me at:

solala@abodetao.com



Great Spiraling Dragon Qigong Form

As taught by Solala Towler



1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Root deeply into the Earth for at least nine breaths.
3. Open the *bai hui* for at least nine breaths.



4. Embrace the Moon (small circle)



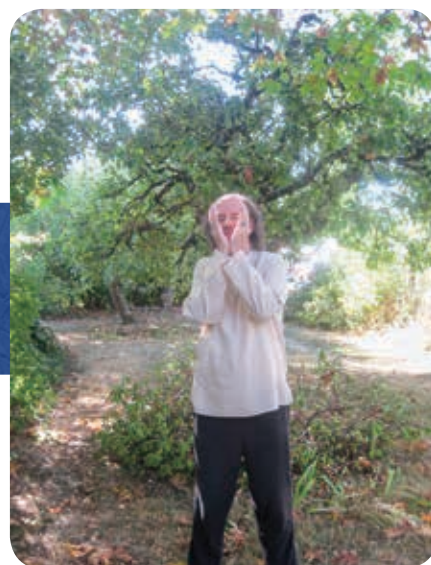
5. Embrace the Sun (big circle).



6. Hands come up to the waist and go around the belt channel, fingers pointing in.



7. Hands come together over the *ming men* point (center of the lower back). Hands come down.
8. Embrace the Moon.
9. Embrace the Sun.



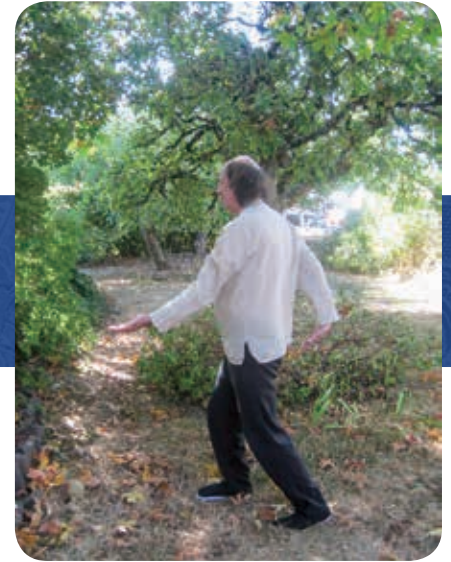
10. Hands come up to eye level and do Lotus Blooming From the Pond. Breathe in the Blooming Lotus at least three times.



11. Spiraling Dragon Ascends to Heaven.
12. Palms turn up to receive Qi from the Heavens.
13. Palms face down to pour Qi into the *bai hui* for three breaths.
14. Repeat palms up, receiving Qi from the Heavens.
15. Repeat palms face down to pour Qi into the *bai hui*.



16. Dragon Descends into the Sea. (Palms come down the sides of your body.)
17. Circle palms around the feet and guide them up the insides of your legs to the lower *dan tien*.
18. Hold palms over the *dan tien* and breathe at least three times. (Men, right palm over left; and women, left palm over right.)
19. Embrace the Moon.



20. Pivot your body to the right with the left palm up and right palm down.



21. Pivot to the left with the right palm up and left palm down.
22. Repeat the last two moves once more.
23. Turn back to the center and Embrace the Sun.



24. Gather Qi into the lower *dan tien* and breathe slowly and deeply at least nine times.
25. Palms circle the *dan tien* nine times counter-clockwise then nine times clockwise.

Doing this exercise once a day in the morning will influence the flow of Qi through your body, affecting the way you make Tea, especially gongfu. More fluidity in the flow of subtle energies throughout the body is a powerful way to improve your tea brewing and overall health.

A tea practice must include all areas of life, as a Way of communicating with Spirit. Follow these instructions and try it out!

SUN MOON LAKE RED KOMBUCHA

Shane Marrs

Many of you have enjoyed kombucha with us after lunch. Nowadays, we ferment all kinds of tea, and try to have some kombucha available after every midday meal. Elevation, from Sun Moon Lake, makes some of the best kombucha every time! In this article, Shane shares some of his fermenting tips so you can start having some living kombucha tonic around to share.

茶道

As many of you know, we often drink kombucha here at the Tea Sage Hut. And those of you who have visited us within the last year or two have almost certainly drunk some with us. We partake of this effervescent, living brew to aid in digestion, and because it's alive, healthy, and delicious! We ferment and bottle our own kombucha, using a variety of different teas. We generally aim for great flavor and lots of fizz by using good, clean tea, organic sugar, and by bottling to create a secondary fermentation phase. Sometimes we'll bottle using fruits and roots (pineapple and ginger is a classic) to change the flavor, fizz, and body of the brew, but more recently we've been trying the pure approach: using tea and sugar and nothing else.

As is the nature of kombucha, in all its mystery, we experience a large range of results: Some are fizzier than others (some explosive!), some more sugary and others lean towards vinegar. (That's not to say our brewing parameters couldn't be much more refined and carefully managed to yield more consistent results.) Home fermentation is a mysterious

and wild process and some variation is to be expected and celebrated. Not to mention the differences that occur throughout the seasons, especially in a hot and humid sub-tropical environment like Taiwan's. The changes in kombucha from batch to batch could be likened to the differences in tea from year to year. The terroir of the kombucha, as it were, depends on the balance of many factors like amount and type of sugar and tea, microorganism ratios, brewing parameters, fermentation time, pH, bottling techniques, temperature, and so on. And we shouldn't forget the energetic influences that the brewer has on the process! It is, after all, a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeasts. It's a living, breathing culture of beings, and they are as influenced by our energy (Qi) as we are by theirs!

Some of our favorite fermentations have resulted from this month's Sun Moon Lake red tea—a Living Tea to make living kombucha! This large-leaf, Assam varietal red tea is great for making kombucha. The large, dark and twisted leaves make brewing and straining easy. SML red

has a signature fruity, minty and spicy taste, a flavor many of you know well from drinking it here or receiving it in previous years through Global Tea Hut. Though the fermentation process can change most qualities quite radically, that signature flavor shines through. SML red also has an uplifting energy that's suitable for elevating you in the morning while simultaneously keeping you calm. These qualities, after about a week's worth of fermentation, transform into an invigorating brew.

Of course, it's much better to share this month's tea with all your brothers and sisters around the world, drinking it together in a bowl. But if you really want to try SML kombucha, come on over to the center and I'll put a batch in the rotation for you. Then you'll be able to experience all of the unique characteristics associated with SML red transformed into a slightly sweet and sour, carbonated health tonic! Alternatively, you could find a way of locating some yourself, or take some home with you when you visit...

Surely, some of you brew kombucha at home already. For

those of you who don't, or those who are simply open to other methods of brewing, we'll provide a general outline of how we ferment our kombucha at the center. Bear in mind there are as many ways to make kombucha as there are flavors on store shelves, and no one method is better than another. It really is a matter of personal preference. Though it might be added that some methods deviate from the norm by so much that they could be called something else altogether. (What that is, I'm not sure.) For this reason, we'll keep things straightforward and more in alignment with what kombucha traditionally was: fermented sweet tea. This is also an easy method that everyone can approach.

If you don't have any SML red to spare for making kombucha, another red tea will suffice. But it should be organic and ideally something that you enjoy drinking. You will also want to source a refined, organic sugar. The bacteria and yeasts present in kombucha are very sensitive, so any chemical residues found in dirty tea or inorganic sugar can be quite harmful to the entire culture.

What is this culture? And where can you find one? As I mentioned before, the culture is a symbiotic one of bacteria and yeasts that form a growing, visible layer, often seen floating on top of your brew. It's usually referred to by the acronym: "S.C.O.B.Y." (Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria & Yeasts), or a "mother" because as the scoby grows, it generates what might be called "daughters" or daughter-like layers.

The Basics

It's easy enough these days, depending on where you live, to either ask around for someone to give you a spare scoby (plus some starter solution), or to purchase one online or at a local kombucha distributor, should you be lucky enough to have access to one. The starter solution is just some leftover kombucha that has become quite vinegary. Purchasing a new one or using a friend's both have

their pros and cons. A friend's may be more convenient, but a purchased one may be purer and better stored. In any case, it's easy to get started!

You'll need some basic materials to make kombucha, like a large glass jar or suitable fermenting vessel, a pitcher, strainer, scale, cooking pot, porcelain tasting spoons, cheesecloths and elastic bands, and bottles if you want to create some carbonation. The size and volume of all of these materials depends on how much you want to make. I use a 15L glass jar, a 5L pitcher, a very large cooking pot, and some 1L to 3L bottles. That's probably three times the volume that an average home-brewer might make, but we drink and share a lot of kombucha around here!

Keep in mind, that if you are going to bottle in a secondary fer-

mentation phase, use good quality bottles, like swing-top glass bottles or bottles that can be recapped with a personal capper. Some twist-on cap bottles will also work, though I've had poor (and explosive) experiences with them, not so much because the carbonation was too strong but because the bottles weren't strong enough under pressure. Pressure-rated bottles shouldn't be necessary, but if you have access to them, go for it. In any case, just be safe.

Brewing & Infusing

Once you've acquired the basic materials and a scoby with some starter solution, all you need to do is make some sweet tea. The amount of tea can really depend on the type



of tea you use and how you brew it, but do your best to make a strong and delicious brew. Aim to make something you would drink at home. For red tea, there are three brewing options: one, is to use less leaves and let them infuse overnight (or until your tea has cooled to room temperature), straining them off in the morning; two, is to use more leaves and steep them until the tea has reached its desired flavor (this may require multiple short infusions of less water each time); and three, again use more leaves and make a concentrated brew which you then dilute with cold water. The benefit of the third brewing method is that it's much quicker to boil a quarter of the water to make the concentrated brew, and diluting it cools it down immediately which allows you to continue on with the process, as opposed to the other two

methods which require you to wait until the tea has cooled naturally. It must cool down because the scoby is temperature-sensitive and will die if introduced to a tea beyond a certain temperature. I always let mine cool to room temperature. I have used varying amounts of SML red tea, generally around eight grams per liter, and have attempted all three brewing methods. A very dear tea brother of ours, who makes kombucha commercially, highly recommends the third brewing method and using more tea than I've stated above. Of course, heed professional advice, and also experiment with what you've got.

As for sugar, I weigh about fifty grams per liter of tea. Make sure to add the sugar when the liquor is hot so that it fully dissolves. Taste it and get an experiential feel for how

sweet it is before adding the scoby and starter.

Fermenting

Once you've brewed a satisfying sweet tea that has cooled to room temperature, it's time to introduce the scoby and starter solution. Make sure the glass jar in which you will be fermenting is thoroughly cleaned. Cleanliness plays a major role in determining the quality of your final product, and often the difference between a living and dead culture. Remember the scoby is very sensitive, and more vulnerable to contamination in its beginning stages. Add the tea to the fermenting vessel (strain it if necessary). Add the starter solution (which adjusts the pH) and gently lay the scoby on top. Usually it will float, but don't be alarmed if it doesn't. Place a cloth over the mouth of the fermenting vessel and fasten it on with an elastic band. The cloth should allow the vessel to breathe but prevent critters and flies from getting in.

Store your vessel in a dark, ventilated and safe location. Mark the date somewhere on the vessel or in a notepad. Sample it daily with a clean porcelain spoon to see how it develops. If this is your first attempt with a new scoby, your tea will likely develop a very thin new scoby on the surface of the tea. It will require time to thicken. Not to worry.

Depending on quite a number of factors and your own personal preference, you can bottle or drink your kombucha after roughly two to twenty days. It takes time to figure out what you like and to stay in tune with how the balance of your culture develops. It's a labor or love!

Bottling

Should you decide to bottle, clean them first and strain your kombucha from the brewing vessel into a



pitcher. Fill the bottles up as much as possible! You might also want to add some fruit at this point (or roots like ginger or turmeric, herbs, etc.) directly into the bottles. Beware that these will drastically change the kombucha from its pure potential and will usually speed up the development of carbonation. There's a lot of room to experiment when adding fruits, roots, herbs or other flavors.

Again, store your bottles in a secure and dark space to let them build carbonation. Check them daily for visible signs of carbonation. It could take as little as one day or as long as one month to develop good fizz! It all depends. It might take some time to get a feel for how your kombucha develops in the bottle. It really helps to record everything in a notepad or a spreadsheet to

give you an accurate idea of when your kombucha is finished. I have a spreadsheet to record dates, volumes, amounts, and comments.

Leave about ten to fifteen percent of the kombucha solution in the vessel along with the scoby. It can reside there until your next batch. (Notice how the scoby developed and grew!) You might want to discard the new growth by peeling it carefully off of the original mother, and save it in some solution to pass on to a friend or maybe compost it. Some brewers just let it be, growing thicker and thicker. I try to keep my scoby about a centimeter or two thick. If you're not going to brew again within a week or so, you might consider sealing it in a jar and storing it in your refrigerator. Just make sure

it has a reasonable pool of sweet tea to hibernate in.

Enjoy the process! It's wild, quite literally, and always changing in exciting ways. There's lots of information online (too much actually). It's as simple as making sweet tea, letting it cool, adding the starter, letting it ferment, and drinking it when you like it. Feel free to contact me at shanegmarrs@gmail.com to make comments or inquire for more information. I'd be glad to share some great fermentation links and books I've come across over the years, and many other details I've left out of this article. Raising a bowl to you on your new or renewed kombucha journey!



UNDERSTANDING CHA QI, PART II

Wu De

In this second part of our exploration of Cha Qi, Wu De gives us some practical tips for beginning to sense and work with Qi in our Tea practice. He then goes on to discuss some of the kinds of Cha Qi that one experiences along the Way.

茶氣

Here are some guidelines that will help you to begin to become sensitive to the Qi in Tea. These methods are merely suggestions—the ways that Tea veterans have used to teach Tea drinkers to approach Cha Qi for some time. They aren't laws carved in stone. Feel free to alter any of them to suit your situation. After all, you know your own body and mind better than anyone else! What relaxes you and how to focus your mind on the Qi will be, in the end, up to you.

Furthermore, many of these guidelines were designed for “non-practitioners” so to speak. In other words, those who have practiced meditation, Taiji, QiGong, etc., often are already more sensitive to their bodies and don't need so much structure in their approach to Qi. However, for those who are already having difficulty with grasping the idea of “energy” or “flow”, or are skeptical, these guiding principles may be helpful.

In our tradition, we always spend some of our meditation practicing concentration (*Samadhi*) meditation, utilizing our breath to calm and center the mind, developing focus. It doesn't matter whether we are a novice or a master, we always

practice in this way, because when we come to the meditation cushion our minds are all too often like the turbulent waves of a stormy sea, tossed about by emotional turmoil, professional difficulties and other stresses. If we don't calm down, we'll never have the focus to feel the more subtle aspects of our being. Similarly, when drinking Tea, the master and student alike must utilize certain loose guidelines to help calm the mind down enough to be aware of the Qi moving through us. Eventually, though, connection to that aspect of ourselves becomes easier and easier.

All of these approaches are by no means necessities for any Tea ceremony, though you will soon realize that they all help to make the Tea space more serene, peaceful and experientially rewarding in the long-run, not to speak of Qi or its appreciation. To us, Qi cultivation is a very important part of Cha Dao, and one we wouldn't want to live without.

Adequate Time

One must be sure to allocate enough time for one's Tea sessions. This is especially important for beginners. It will be impossible for

the mind to ever calm down if one is busy worrying about one's commitments. If we are in a hurry, and our mind is racing through the things we did or need done, we will never be peaceful enough to feel the subtle changes happening in us. This would be like trying to see into the waters of a choppy, turbulent river.

You will calm down and experience Qi more easily without any distractions. For that reason, it's best to *turn off your cell phone*—not allowing any outside influence to disturb yourself or others present. Some may want to do some breathing exercises or listen to some soothing music, or perhaps you may just sit quietly for a few minutes before even approaching the Tea, allowing the cares of the world to slip far away so that no aspect of the ceremony is rushed. If it helps, think about the freedom you have on this day: “I want to be here! This is what I want to be doing Now, drinking Tea. I have nothing else to do today but this.” Like a lazy Saturday morning, or a day spent on vacation, half of the relaxation and peace comes just from the knowledge that our time is truly free, that we really have nothing to worry about for the rest of the day (or perhaps morning, or afternoon, etc.)

The Environment

Traditionally, most Tea rooms were always decorated in a simple yet elegant way. The light should be soft and dim, and the room should be quiet. It is also better if one's Tea space is properly ventilated and comfortable. Decorations that inspire relaxation, like bonsai trees, flowers or some nice calligraphy are often preferable. While many masters gravitate towards simplicity in teaware, as well as décor, it is only really important that the teaware doesn't distract from the experience of the Tea itself.

A nice *chaxi* (tea stage) is a great way to enhance the session, and celebrate the 'one encounter, one chance' we have to meet Here and Now. Flowers, sacred objects, candles, beautiful objects from nature (rocks, wood, etc.)—all help to fill the space with a calming energy that increases our sensitivity to Qi. You needn't spend any money to make a great *chaxi*; it's more about the heart you put into the occasion.

The ambiance should have an overall sense of serenity. The best Tea houses or Tea spaces make one feel peaceful and calm almost right away; and the more untroubled the body and mind are, the easier it will be to recognize the subtle sensations in the body.

It often helps to wear loose-fitting and comfortable clothes. Our house clothes often help us to relax just by association. Being comfortable is paramount if one is to relax; and like we said, focusing on things like having enough time to fully enjoy the Tea, doing so in a peaceful environment and wearing comfortable clothes—all of these make the Tea session so much more enjoyable, besides helping create an environment more conducive to experiences of Qi, transcendence or Dao.

Quiet

Perhaps the most important aspect of learning to feel Qi is that the Tea session include some quiet.



Our minds are at times a tempest of thoughts, doubts and worries, and we may come to the Tea space with all kinds of stress and turmoil. No matter whether you view Tea as a Dao, a hobby or a beverage, all Tea drinkers have in common that they wish to find a little relaxation, peace and quiet—some time away from the stresses of ordinary life. For that reason, almost any Tea session is improved by some quietude.

Of course, sometimes Tea is social and we use Tea to bring comfort to friends and help make light of each other's company, but most

Tea drinkers we know (besides those doing business in Tea) will testify that such social occasions represent the smallest portion of their Tea drinking. Most of our daily Tea is just us and our Leaf, and as such—if it is ever to be a Dao—quietude is paramount.

Chatting only stimulates the mind to focus on external events, rather than concentrating on the body, the Qi and the Tea. We have yet to meet the person that can fully experience their body, taste buds, olfactory sensations, etc. and carry on a conversation at the same



time. We can't pay attention to the Tea and talk about outside topics at the same time; it just isn't possible. Talking only carries us away from the moment. And we would say this goes for note-taking too. One may wish to write down some of one's experience, but the more energy one devotes to this internal dialogue going on, the less one is present to the moment and sensations at hand. It seems odd that we wish to talk to ourselves, or to some future listener/reader rather than being in the space that the Tea is creating.

Try to find a way to be comfortable with silence. It may help to close your eyes as much as possible during the session, which guides the attention inward, towards the sensations in the body, stopping our natural tendency towards distraction.

Eventually, you will even begin to crave the quiet. We have seen so many ordinarily loquacious individuals (including myself), no matter how talkative and uncomfort-

able with silence—especially when it is in public—who were comfortably silenced for hours at a time by drinking great teas.

External quietude reminds us of the Stillness in our hearts, allowing us to rest in that space. Over time, we develop the ability to be still even in noise. Still, Tea rewards quietude. Sometimes when someone is quiet, they notice new things in a Tea they have been drinking daily for a long time. By approaching the Tea with focus, new dimensions are opened up, and they are often very healthy and blissful as well.

By starting Tea sessions with some quiet, if you then decide to move into a conversation, you will find that it comes from the heart. Then, you find yourself talking about things that matter.

You may find that some peaceful music, usually without lyrics, also helps to inspire your guests to turn inwards, relating to the Tea, themselves and the space in a different

way. Tea and music have been paired for millennia, and work well together in harmony. Finding the right music for Tea is also a great joy!

Diet

We must remember that Cha Dao is a lot more than just being peaceful when we are in our Tea rooms, enjoying ourselves. Having had profoundly serene experiences, it would be impossible for one to then walk out of that room and live the rest of one's life in unhealthy ways; for in essence the one who wasn't transformed by an experience of transcendence as such couldn't have had a very deep one.

Once a person truly experiences the harmony of a life lived naturally, healthy and with the Dao, living otherwise becomes all that much more uncomfortable now that she is hyper-sensitive of the subtle differences in her being, caused by things like diet, environment, stress, etc.



The more subtle our minds become, the more we realize the simple truth that we are what we eat, as much as what we drink, and so much of our connection to Tea comes through the very fact that it is “consumed”, combining with and becoming a part of us. We are becoming the Tea, as we drink it, and it is also becoming us. The same is true for what we eat.

There is a very good reason why meditators have always promoted a healthy, light vegetarian diet. Eating meat is grosser, heavier and dulls the senses. When we eat large meals with lots of meat, we feel sleepy, dull and unaware. Tea masters have also found that it is far more difficult to become sensitive to our bodies and approach Qi when we have eaten such heavy foods. Beyond just meat, one cannot expect to be sensitive of one’s body if one is consistently eating junk

food. If one’s connection to their body is dull enough to be unaware of the affects such garbage is having on their being, how can one hope at all to approach the even more subtle aspects of existence?

Many times, we will eat a light snack before the Tea session. It is best to approach the Tea with neither an empty nor a full stomach. Drinking Tea on an empty stomach might make one feel some slight discomfort, and a full stomach dulls one’s ability to taste, smell and of course feel the sensations caused by the Qi. A clear sense of one’s body overall is a great place to start from. Even if you aren’t vegetarian, it may be useful to eat only veggies before Tea ceremonies, allowing for a lighter, more sensitive body that encourages the experience of Qi.

茶
道

Kinds of Cha Qi

Generally, Cha Qi will manifest in one of several overall patterns. Each session, however, will have slight variations, even if the same Tea is drunk twice. Of course, every moment is bright and new as we bring to each Tea session a different body and mind.

Tea and Qi are, after all, not just a cup of liquor, but also the interaction of that liquor with a human being, and both are constantly changing. Every single ceremony will be different from all the others before—the one brewing and even the leaves themselves will have changed too, even if it is only a week later. Here are some overall patterns in the way Cha Qi manifests itself:

- You may feel a movement akin to a hiccup, as the Qi rises up inside. This isn't really a hiccup, but stimulates one's inside in a slightly similar way.
- A feeling of sensations rising up the spine; often through the *du mai* (the meridian that travels up the spine).
- Sometimes people will have some blockages, caused by unhealthy parts of the body or poor diet, and when they open, it could

recognized their Qi, all of which were unable to explain why afterwards. I think sometimes as the Qi opens up, it breaks through turmoil or stress we are carrying in us and emotions arise, like pus coming out of a wound that needs to be opened. The first time my wife ever drank a really old Puerh she went outside after twenty minutes. When I went out to check on her, I found her crying. I asked her what was wrong and after realizing that

On the Head

- The Qi may go straight up to the *bai hui* (Hundred Meetings), forehead or the back of the brain if it is strong enough. This will cause a kind of fullness or numb feeling throughout the whole body.
- Sometimes you may feel an itchy, hot sensation in the cheeks. This often leads to a kind of massage of the eyeballs, eyebrow region or the acupuncture point called "*tai yang xue*".
- The Qi may revolve around the head in spirals.

On the Body

- Usually, the Qi moving through the body follows two different patterns: The first is when it moves backwards to forwards in waves of subtle sensations. Sometimes this might feel as a spiraling around the body. The second is a kind of delicate pulsing or rhythm inside the body.



mean perspiration or even sharp pain in the acupuncture points. Sometimes these openings might result in sweating, heat or palpitations as well, though these could be as a result of the nature of the Tea leaves themselves. If the sensation is related to the movement of Qi, it should recede after a few passes.

- Sometimes the initial reaction of the Qi might cause emotions to surface. I have witnessed several people weep when they first

she didn't know, she even began laughing about the absurdity of her tears. I have also seen several people burst out in great guffaws of laughter for no apparent reason, often contagiously inspiring the whole room to laugh.

- Sometimes the Qi will pass over the skin, other times through the flesh. If the Tea is strong enough, the whole body will be enveloped in a warm vibration of energy that feels like tingling.

- There are some teas that even bring with them a sensation as if the Qi is descending on one from without, like standing in a shower of water.

On the Hands and Legs

- The Qi is easier to feel moving down the elbows towards the palms and then the fingertips. It often causes them to feel slightly numb. It may be felt as an ever-so-slight sting in the fingertips that isn't uncomfortable, and is useful for concentration.

Soft Cha Qi (Yin)

In looking at the traditional symbol for Yin and Yang as it has been represented for so long, one can see that both the white Yang and black Yin contain a seed of the other within them, which is to say that they are interdependent and cannot arise without the other. In other words, there is no pure Yin energy, as it will always have elements of its counterpart. Yin represents darkness, passivity and femininity; it refers to the deeper, accepting, introverted nature of things—the movement inward, subtle and gentle; the dying and ending of all things. The Daoist novel from the Song Dynasty, *Seven Daoist Masters*, translated eloquently by Eva Wong, speaks about the more spiritual side of these energies thus: “Yang is the clear, conceptualizing intelligence; Yin is the receptive, intuiting quietude.”

This kind of Qi makes one's mind calm and generates a peaceful, light feeling. It is elegant and often results in a cottony inner rhythm. The gentleness can increase gradually, but even when perception is consumed by it, this kind of Qi remains feathery and light. It is soft and comfortable. Usually, Yin energy is deeper and more consuming, as well as longer lasting than its counterpart. Yin energy takes much longer to gather strength, like water ever so slowly pouring downward, but once it does become great, it will be

more powerful and enduring than Yang energy.

Strong Cha Qi (Yang)

Yang refers to the masculine, outward opening of energy. It is the birth, the creativity and flourishing of outward motion. This energy is brisk and quick, arising fiercely and passionately, but ultimately burning out into blackness. It is the daytime sun and growth of living things.

This stronger kind of Cha Qi often hits one after the first sip, or smell even. Some teas will cause Qi to rise right to the top of the head after the first taste, causing a numb feeling similar to that felt just before fainting. This type of Qi often causes grosser sensations like perspiration, heat or a quickened pulse. However, after these pass and blockages are cleared, one is usually left with an overall sense of comfort. We have found that the stronger, Yang Qi tends to follow two general patterns: One is lower in density, causing a sensation that feels almost as if

there are gaps between the atoms of the body. The movement or pulsing is slower with more space between the so-called “wavelengths” of the vibrations in the body. The second variety moves more rapidly and feels like a strong current of too many small particles to really distinguish any one. This kind of Qi is higher in density and often merges the whole body into a mass of waves that are vibrating briskly.

With these guidelines, we hope you will begin to utilize Tea for Qi cultivation if you haven't already. In doing so, we can appreciate yet another dimension of Tea. And that's important to remember: we aren't suggesting that Qi is more enjoyable than other aspects of Tea, like flavor, aroma or mouthfeel, but rather that without it, your experience of a Tea is incomplete. Furthermore, Qi cultivation plays a large role in what makes Tea a Dao, a Way, for it is through this that we find connection to the Universe around us, our inner Stillness and each other as well.



Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. 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 share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month we would like to introduce the talented Solala Towler:

I never drank tea or coffee when I was young, but in the early 70's, while living in a meditation hut on a quiet street in Berkeley, my friend Spike introduced me to the delights of coffee. I became a dedicated coffee drinker after that. Then, in the late 70's, after a bout with infectious hepatitis, I switched to red tea. Around twenty-five years ago, when I was exploring Daoist thought, Qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine, I switched to green tea and truly began my tea journey.

Each morning, I begin the day with several pots of Dragon Well (*Long Jing*) green tea. I find it provides a gentle lift rather than a big jolt like coffee or strong red tea. I still like a good cup of Indian chai in the afternoon, though. I had one of the best cups of tea in my life (along with the best slice of apple pie I ever had) at a hotel in Lhasa, Tibet, run by folks from Nepal. I sat in the courtyard of the traditional-style hotel at 3,600 meter on a sunny day, just happy to be alive and in Tibet, a life-long dream. The tea journey is like this: different cups of tea suit different places and times, and often seem to capture and enhance the moment in such a special way.

These days, I often brew gongfu tea for many people, including some friends who've never seen a gongfu tea ceremony and wonder why I am pouring out the first steeping when I just told them that we're drinking a high quality tea! I find that when I teach Qigong seminars, having a tea ceremony in the middle is a great way to help people arrive in the present moment and share some nice plant/water/fire energies in the middle of the weekend. I have also started having full moon gongfu tea ceremonies for around fifteen people.

A few years ago, I got to write a book called *Cha Dao: The Way of Tea, Tea as a Way of Life* published by a company called Singing Dragon. It is really a primer on Daoism and Zen, using the metaphor of Tea Mind to explore those philosophies. It was a very fun project to do, fueled by numberless cups of fine tea!

I have been publishing the Daoist journal *The Empty Vessel* for twenty-one years and lead annual tours to the sacred Daoist mountains of China to drink tea, practice Qigong and meditation.



I am so happy to connect with this wonderful family of tea through this magazine and plan on coming to visit Tea Sage Hut after my next trip to China. I am also very happy to connect with my new tea brother, Wu De. I feel such a kinship with him through his books and this magazine. I am grateful that such a wonderful thing exists and look forward to sharing these teas with so many tea brothers and sisters all over the world!

I can be reached for tea at solala@abodetao.com

or at my website: www.abodetao.com.

Inside the Hut



In **Los Angeles**, there are Global Tea Hut events every Thursday at 6 PM and Sunday at 9:30 AM. To reserve a spot, email Colin at livingteas@gmail.com. The community in LA also has a new meet up page: (<http://www.meetup.com/Los-Angeles-Tea-Ceremony-Meetup/>).



In **Barcelona, Spain**, Global Tea Hut member Antonio holds tea events each month at Caj Chai Teahouse. Contact him at info@cajchai.com for more info.



In **Moscow, Russia**, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at teeabai@gmail.com or Denis at chikchik25@gmail.com for details.



In **Nice, France**, GTH member Sabine holds regular tea events at the tearoom Les Causeries de Blandine. You can email her at sabine@letempsdunthe.com.



In **Darwin, Australia**, Sam holds GTH tea events on Fridays at 6 PM. Email him at sdsgibb@gmail.com.



In **Tallinn, Estonia**, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact events@firstflush.ee for more details. Also, Timo Einpaul and Herkko Labi both hold small weekly tea events in their homes in Tartu, Estonia and Tallinn, Estonia (respectively), on Wednesdays at 6 PM. You can email Timo at timo@sygis.net and Herkko at herkots@gmail.com.



In **England**, Prabhasvara (Nick Dilks) holds regular Tea events all around the UK including a weekly Tea Club in Birmingham. For more information, please contact him at livingteauk@gmail.com.



In **Almere, The Netherlands**, GTH member Jasper holds tea events every 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:45 PM. Email him at hermansjasper@gmail.com.



Center News



Before you visit, check out the center's website (www.teasagehut.org) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. We've had a big increase in our number of guests lately, so if possible please contact us well in advance to arrange a visit.



If you are interested in one of the 2014 Ai Lao cakes you should order one soon. There were only 150 made in total and many have already been sold. Check out our website for details: www.globaltea-hut/1mlcakes.html



Our two other puerh cakes will be arriving any day now! Look for updates online or in next month's magazine.



Wu De will be teaching in Spain & France this month. Contact Antonio at Caj Chai Teahouse (info@cajchai.com) for more information about dates and events.



Wu De's new book is being formatted and will soon be ready. We'll be announcing its publication here and online!

OCTOBER AFFIRMATION

Tea is infused by us, as much as by the water and fire.

In what ways am I putting my heart and soul into the Tea I brew? Is my Tea a service for others?

A close-up photograph of a tea branch with green leaves and small, round, green tea buds. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the tea plant. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

Tea Inspired Poetry

*The world sometimes feels dark,
lonely and lost,
And you, you are so far away.
But there are always two bowls
on my table...*

—Wu De

*(Based on an anonymous
Tang Dynasty poem.)*