

Global Tea Hut

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE
May 2015

雨
森
林

"RAINFOREST" SHENG PUERH
MASTER LIN PING XIANG
VOICES FROM THE HUT



RAINFOREST

We have to pay respect to our elders if we are to evolve this tradition forward. For many years now, Wu De has been planning to write about his gongfu teacher, Master Lin Ping Xiang. Along with an amazing wild tea to sip for many bowls, we finally get to meet one of the most important modern Chajin, whose influence in our center is so pronounced.

*Love is
Changing the world
Bowl by bowl*

FEATURES

09 THE NEED FOR A TEACHER

17 WHO IS A TEA EXPERT?

21 LIGHT MEETS LIFE CAKES

Inner Path, Shou Puerh Brick

23 MASTER LIN PING XIANG



3



9

REGULARS

03 TEA OF THE MONTH

*Spring 2011 Wild Purple Tea
De Hong, Yunnan*

15 GONGFU TEA TIPS

33 VOICES FROM THE HUT

37 TEA WAYFARER

Lindsey Diacogiannis, USA/Australia



25



© 2015 by Global Tea Hut

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the copyright owner.

Letter from the Editor

In May, we enter the season for Tea! All the harvests start to come in and we begin to gauge the year in Tea. There was a time long ago when the official start of spring was the day the emperor sipped the first flush of green tea. In a life of Cha Dao, not much has changed since then. There are now many harvests a year in commercial tea production, though there was traditionally only one in spring (with the occasional surprise in autumn). But even with more harvests, nothing compares to the spring, when the rains and weather concord to produce the finest Tea symphonies.

We decided that this month we would honor our teachers and tradition. With a good teacher and a book, anyone without a learning disability can learn algebra in two years. If you take away the teacher, maybe half of us could still learn algebra with just a book (especially if the book was written by a good teacher). But none of us could ever learn algebra without the book or the teacher. People on desert islands don't learn algebra. Even if I lived on that island and did nothing but brew tea all day from early morning until late at night I could never figure out even a third of what I know about Tea. I am not its author. It was poured into me by all the amazing teachers I have had the fortune of learning with. And when it comes to tea brewing, none have taught me more than Lin Ping Xiang.

We must remember, as well, that the best way to honor a tradition is to keep it alive—to grow it. A tradition only lives in the flesh and blood of those who are *living* it; otherwise it is a tomb or a dusty old book. And as living, breathing wisdom, a tradition must also grow. In serving tea, sharing our brewing methods and our approach to Tea as plant medicine, we keep this tradition alive. If we serve others around us, then this tradition doesn't just improve the lives of its members, but of the world. And everyone in this Hut is here because we love Tea, love Nature and love each other...

As this community grows up, we have to take the time to stop and bow to the generation of tea masters before us, many of whom have so ceaselessly strove to give their heart, time and love to help us prosper in our own Tea journeys. In the legendary origin of Zen, the twenty-eighth patriarch, Bodhidharma, brought Buddhism east from India to China, where it not only prospered but was revitalized and refined—ultimately it was also shared with Korea and Japan where it was also treasured. In each of these places, new enlightened masters added to the body of wisdom, expanding and growing an understanding of practice and life. There are many, including my own Zen master, that believe that a similar thing is happening in this age, as many



of the Eastern traditions make their way to the West. In many ways, globalization is ending traditional cultures, languages and practices. That process isn't all bad—it expands communication and opens a door towards a future without nations, as people of a single Earth. But not all progress is good either; sometimes we throw the good out in the name of change, especially when the future is quicker and more convenient.

My Zen master often spoke of the movement of Tea and Zen into Western hands using an analogy of Bodhidharma taking Buddhism from India, where it was dying, to China, where it would thrive. Of course, this movement will not be a complete one; it wasn't in Bodhidharma's time either. But it is amazing to see the changing colors of alchemical smoke that have resulted from the meeting of ancient traditions and modern Western people. There is great beauty in knowing that we live in a world where the best teachings and teaware, methods and approaches are being blended to create new and exciting forms of culture and spiritual practice. Such cultural exchange has always happened; it's how all cultures change and grow. And into this growing, changing world of Tea, some very, very old practices are resurfacing just when they are needed most. This Global Tea Hut is a testament to that!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to the editor, Lin Ping Xiang.

Tea of the Month



SPRING 2011 WILD PURPLE TEA

We hike until the bird-song seems to come from within you. The forest breathes with you, as well—its out-breath is your in, back and forth. There is that feeling of Nature when it is free, which resonates like the rhythm beneath the birds' melodies within you, and makes you feel free, too. This forest is ancient. It feels old and rooted. The small waterfalls and creeks remind you that they lead up and out of this jungle—up to the top of the world. The snowy Himalayan springs seem so distant here, though their energy is a part of the thrumming forest, the dark, loamy soil and the lives of the trees and animals. After walking much further than you thought you would, we round a bend and stop. We leave the path and follow a small, lesser-worn trail into the bush. Over a small rise and down into a valley, we come upon the tea garden. All around are thousands of other trees; the kind you look up through, mingling with their moss-covered twists to blend into the blue sky above. The tea trees are amazingly dark purple all over. The purples shift and dance into greens

all over the trees. Holding a bunch of leaves in your hands, you turn them towards the sun and watch the blue-purple shift to redder hues as the light passes through them.

We harvest the tea together with the aboriginals and you feel more connected to Tea than ever. And these magic trees are like no other Tea tree you've been around, with a wild, feminine energy all their own. They are a mystical secret you've been initiated into—a stirring tale of ancient and magic medicines, brewed by old sages that can fly...

Yunnan is a magical forest: vibrant and radiant with life, it is home to more than twenty-five percent of all China's living species. Crystal waters flow down from the top of the Earth, mineralized on their way down from the Tibetan plateau. Plants are larger here, boasting astonishing blossoms and greater crowns than could be imagined. The mists and rain, minerals, crystals and water all effuse the forests of Yunnan with an unbelievable abundance.

The old tea trees have roots that delve deep into the earth: over

thirty feet for a five-foot tall tree, and much deeper for taller, old-growth trees. This fills Yunnan tea with trace minerals that can't be found in any other substance on Earth, which help connect us to our Source.

Last issue, we discussed what Living Tea is and why it has such healing potential. We talked about the six characteristics of Living Tea: Seed-propagation, room to grow, biodiversity, no irrigation, chemical-free and a healthy relationship with the humans who tend it. This month's tea is definitely a Living Tea, and through it we can explore the first of these, seed-propagation, in greater detail.

Tea is a sexual plant, which means that it is cross-pollinated. A tremendous amount of natural energy goes into the creation of a Tea seed, including bugs and forest, sun and sky. Each one carries great energy within it. And no two Tea seeds are alike. They will each produce a completely unique Tea tree, which is why Tea has done so well traveling to different climates.





"Rainforest"



De Hong, Yunnan



Raw, Sheng Puerh



De'Ang Aboriginal Tribe



~1000 Meters



De Hong Autonomous Prefecture

De Hong is located in the very western part of Yunnan. The “De” means “below” and the “Hong” is the Nu Jiang River. It borders Myanmar on three of its sides. The area is around 12,000 square kilometers spread over four counties: Lu Xi, Long Chuan, Yin Jiang and Liang He. The population is around one million, and more than half are aboriginal. The major tribes there are the Dai, Jing Po, A’ Chang, Li Su and De’ Ang. These tribes live on both sides of the border, and until recently traveled across it daily without any check.

We have discussed the De’ Ang before, as they are one of the tribes in Yunnan that believe all Life on Earth to be descended from Tea. Most tribes have myths and/or belief systems in which they themselves are descended from Tea. These peoples have used Tea medicine for thousands and thousands of years. The heritage of the people in De Hong still thrives, and traveling there, one will meet many natives who still carry bundles of tea in their coats, ready to share some with any guest they meet.

Most of De Hong is rainforest. In fact, thousands of square kilometers are still pristine. The Da Ying Jiang and Rui Li Jiang rivers feed the forest, and the amazing trees there. There is a very active market for precious stones passing through Myanmar into China, attracting buyers and tourists from across China and beyond. De Hong is a gorgeous part of Yunnan. The rare, precious, wild tea trees alone make a trip there rewarding, indeed.

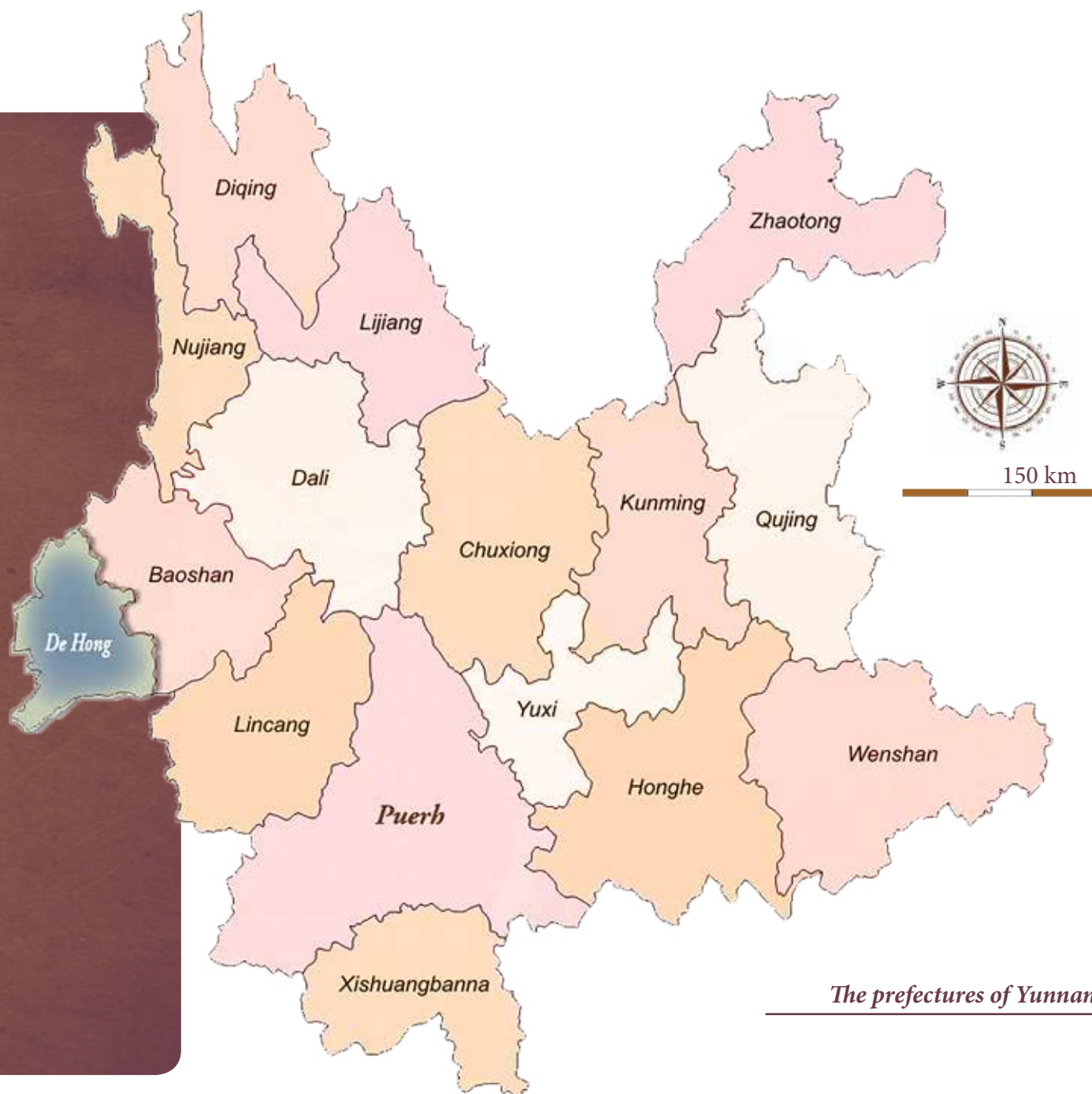
De Hong is home to many rare varieties of wild tea trees, including those with purple leaves. More than 4,000 years ago, ancestors of today's De’ Ang ethnic group, the Pu, harvested and consumed tea leaves. Later, they even planted entire tea gardens. De Hong still contains numerous hundred-and-thousand-year-old tea trees and tea gardens. Most were planted and are still cared for by members of the De’ Ang tribe. Consequently, historians refer to the De’ Ang people as “China's ancient tea farmers.”

If you plant a thousand seeds, the chances that one of them will survive are high. Unfortunately, very little Tea in the world is seed-propagated. The reason, of course, is industry and the commoditization of Tea. Sadly, Tea faces many of the problems that all agricultural products are haunted by. Most tea plantations use cuttings from a tree, planted to produce another. They are in essence clones. They do this to achieve a uniformity of flavor. Also, with a few hundred, or even thousands of different trees, all with different needs, the farmer would potentially have a lot more work to do.

It took millennia for trees like Tea to develop sexual cross-fertilization. It is also tremendously difficult for such trees to fertilize one another, since the mates cannot move towards embrace the way that animals and people can. As a result, plants have developed magnificent ways of fertilizing each other, enticing insects to pollinate them, using the wind, etc. There is a reason for all this. Carl Sagan said that the evolution from asexual to sexual reproduction on this planet was as significant as the beginning of life itself, as it allows for all the creative power in Nature to assert itself in such myriad forms. There is something deep

and powerful missing when a plant is not allowed to cross-fertilize. The variety in Nature is magic, just as in humans. Every tree is then different. Sure, they share some similarities due to common genetic heritage and similar terroir (climate, soil, etc.), but like people they each have their own medicine, their own perspective, experience and wisdom.

Nature has been creating life for millennia, so it is very unhealthy for us to assume that we can improve or alter her designs. Our attempts to interfere with Nature rarely take into account all the biodiversity and infinite, immeasurable connections there are between species.



The prefectures of Yunnan

We take control of an environment and monocrop it, domineering a few factors in a huge web of symmetry. As we've done this to larger and more diverse areas, our meddling has begun to have a global impact, changing the Environment (capital 'E') rather than just the places where we farm.

Actually, none of our creations ever come close to the power or beauty of Nature, especially since we too are one of Her greater masterpieces—so all that we create also owes homage to Mother Earth, ultimately. Allowing Her creative license is an important aspect of the diversity of life that sustains this

planet, and any given environment. When tea is natural and seed-propagated, every single tree is unique. Mutations arise. They each have a place and a hue, and in that way She can create more and varied medicine for us. It is presumptuous to assume that all the variety in tea is man-made, and has to do exclusively with processing, as some authors would suggest. A tremendous amount of variety is natural-born and defies our limited categories.

Because every seed produces a new and unique tea tree, Nature has provided us with a tremendous variety of trees (some are man-made, called “cultivars”, but most are nat-

ural). And there are more varieties in Yunnan than anywhere else, in part because tea has been growing there longer than anywhere else, and in part because the tea is left alone and seed-propagated in many areas. There are even some varieties that are considered to have mutated strongly enough to be a new species, and not *Camellia sinensis* anymore!

Tea of the Month

This month's tea marks yet another increase in quality for the teas of 2015. Our fantastic tea, “Rainforest” comes from wild tea



De' Ang women inviting us for tea

trees in the De Hong Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan. De Hong is still a minor producer compared to the three big tea-producing areas of Yunnan: Puerh, Lincang and Xishuangbanna. But this means that the tea gardens and forests of De Hong are also often cleaner and more pristine. Red tea production in De Hong has increased lately, but it is still very much a remote and aboriginal region, near the border of Myanmar. De Hong has traditionally been famous for its jade markets more than tea.

These wild trees have dark purple leaves due to natural mutation. They are higher in anti-oxidants and catechins than other varieties of tea. “Rainforest” comes from old-growth

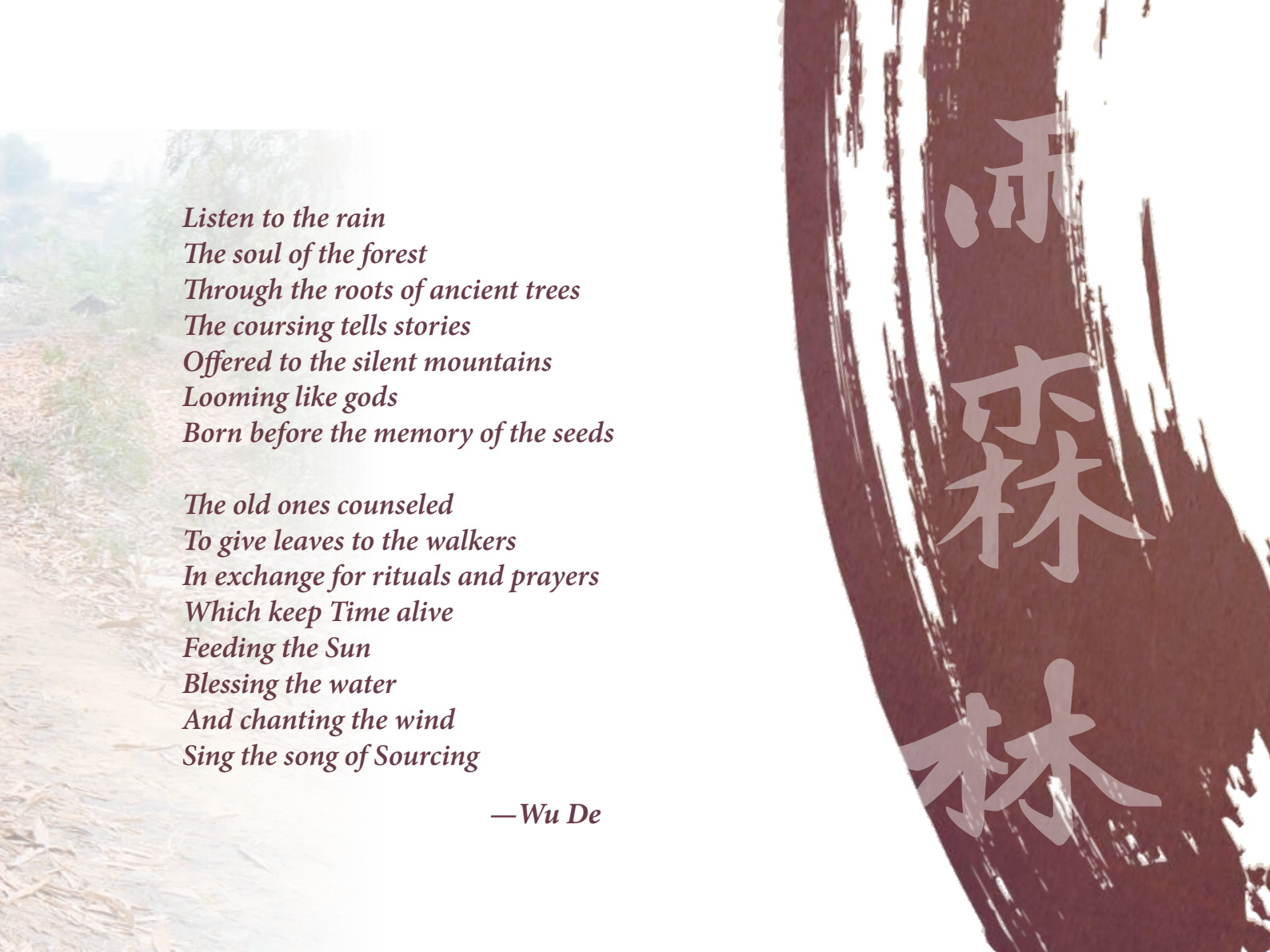
trees that were harvested in the spring of 2011, and meticulously processed by aboriginal hands. The tea has a strong musky aroma, with fruity overtones that De Hong tea is famous for. This tea comes from the same kind of trees as our beloved purple-red, which we also shared with you in September of 2012. Those of you who have tried that delicious tea will recognize some of the same flavors, though less delicate. This tea is strong and vibrant; it's a full-bodied Tea lover's tea.

We find that wild teas like this exemplify all the power of Living Tea. As we all head outdoors to share more tea with Nature, we listen to the birds and the wind and wonder what they are saying. Nature

is always talking to us, and teas like this help us to understand what She is saying.

“Rainforest” is the perfect chance to connect with the older, deeper and non-linear aspects of Tea. In this day and age, many of us have lost our connections to the Sacred—in ourselves, our friends and even Nature. We no longer connect very deeply, not even with our own families. Tea like this month's is good medicine for that.





*Listen to the rain
The soul of the forest
Through the roots of ancient trees
The coursing tells stories
Offered to the silent mountains
Looming like gods
Born before the memory of the seeds*

*The old ones counseled
To give leaves to the walkers
In exchange for rituals and prayers
Which keep Time alive
Feeding the Sun
Blessing the water
And chanting the wind
Sing the song of Sourcing*

—Wu De

雨
森
林

Brewing Tips for Rainforest

We find this tea very nice early in the morning. We would brew this tea in a nice, big side-handle pot, giving the compression room to open up and fully steep. Side-handle tea isn't meant to complicate the process; the spirit is the same as leaves in a bowl—the oldest brewing method on Earth. Over the last few centuries, the varieties and processing methods have grown exponentially. The great news is that we have a huge world of Tea to explore—one that may take us lifetimes. However, not all tea can be prepared by simply dropping leaves in a bowl anymore. Some teas are too fine, or the leaves are compressed like this month's, which means the liquor would be too strong and you'd get bits in your mouth. And yet, we want to be able to enjoy a tea in the spirit of simplicity: *leaves, water and heat*. For this we adopted the second oldest teaware, brewing tea in a side-handle and then decanting it into bowls. Actually, boiling tea in large side-handle pots was very common early on. That

was how all medicinal herbs were boiled, of which Tea was one.

Try pouring this month's tea into bowls and holding your bowl in the same way you would if the leaves were in it, with simplicity and grace. The large side-handle also gives the leaves more room to expand. Use good spring water for tea, whenever possible. And for heat, charcoal is the most desirable, then gas, and lastly electric heat sources. With spring water, charcoal, a side-handle and some bowls, you will have the perfect setup for this month! (If you don't have all that, you must bring the perfection from your heart!)

Try connecting to the Nature and wild forest these trees came from. Meditate on their purple leaves. We have been amazed at how accurate tea lovers around the world are in describing the place a tea comes from without us telling them, having never been there themselves. Sometimes they do this after their very first ever tea session. What connection do you experience through this tea?



THE NEED FOR A TEACHER

-Wu De

Before we read about Wu De's teacher, Lin Ping Xiang, we thought it would be great to share this article that Wu De wrote more than a decade ago on teachers and their place in learning. In that way, we can feel the changes that have come over the years. The younger Wu is full of passion and commitment. There are still a lot of gems in this old piece that we can all learn from as many of us begin our Tea journeys.

If there ever was a time when finding a true master was easy, this is definitely not it. The modern world, with all its light-speed communication, the Internet and travel, has given a voice to billions who otherwise couldn't speak. In many ways, this is a beautiful and positive thing: helping Westerners learn about Tea, for example; or more genuinely perhaps, bringing the voice of a suffering people to the world, etc. However, the downside of this is that the world has also become much noisier—in a baffling way. And this makes finding a teacher much more difficult. And yet Dogen went further than

the above argument, saying that “until you have a true teacher, it is better not to study.”

It is as if you were to arrive on campus for the first day of college. After looking around and asking a few passersby for directions, you finally find the classroom. In the past, one's quest for knowledge ended there—you simply sat down and listened to the teacher. But the classroom has changed: Now, you open the same old door only to find that all the students in the classroom are standing up, walking around and talking at the same time. In such a commotion, how is one to know who the teacher is and who the student?

A cursory survey of the Internet on any subject, including Tea, will

turn up an astronomical number of websites. Searching through them, you will find thousand-page-long blogs, and after reading through them you then realize that the person making all this noise only started learning one month ago, and, like you, has no teacher. Of course, such beginners then disagree on any given subject—for without a mentor, how can there ever be any concordance? In the boisterous classroom, in which you can't even discern the teacher from the students, how can you ever really accept what you overhear? Is it a rumor? Another student's conjecture? Did it actually come from the teacher? Who knows?

When we enter a learning environment, we either respect the



teacher or respect the institution that hired him/her. Though we are encouraged to think for ourselves, to question the teacher's words and evaluate them through our own reason and experience, there must be some level of acceptance. If we are busy questioning every single minute detail of every single lecture, our learning progresses at a snail's pace. Imagine, then, how slowly one develops in an environment where we can't even find the teacher!

I am not in any way suggesting that the voice of those beginners, expressing themselves on the Internet or in person, should be suppressed. That would be a violation of their human right to free speech. I am, instead, merely pointing out how confusing this milieu is to the

beginner who is seeking genuine guidance, for when everyone is presenting different views, and it is unclear who the actual teacher is, then the only recourse is to go at it alone. Also, there is often the misguided notion that the one who blogs or writes the most or the longest is necessarily an "expert", as if making the most noise qualified one. And that is the implicit idea that I think is detrimental to one's progress in any art, especially one that leads into the heart of our spiritual selves like Tea.

I have a friend who blogs on other topics who often asks me "What should I blog about today?" I find that question so ridiculous. If you don't have anything to say, why do you feel such a strong

need to speak? Similarly, in the Tea world, I've noticed that when I ask certain beginners if they have read any publications that have articles and/or interviews with real masters, they respond in the negative. When I wonder why, they say "I'm too busy." Granted, we're all busy; but then I notice that some of these unfortunates spend thirty minutes or an hour blogging about Tea regularly, which then basically leads me to the conclusion that such a person would rather hear his own voice than someone like Zhou Yu or Chen Zhi Tong—people with decades of experience who are often sharing it freely. How can such a person ever hope to progress? Is it not obvious that you can't speak and listen/learn

at the same time? Apparently not, at least for some.

Technically speaking, you can explore Tea on your own; you can doubt everything anyone says and just do everything by trial and error. However, the world of Tea is incredibly deep and takes decades to master even under the guidance of a real teacher, so such a path would extend into centuries we don't have. What's more, most all the greater heights of Tea, the inexpressible sensations and spiritual inclinations, cannot be expressed through words. One has to be initiated into them. Most all the subtle variations in preparation, the differences in Qi, the proper use of teaware, etc. have to be directly experienced, and that can't happen if the teacher isn't there to show you how to do it, and what to look for once you have experienced it. There are countless things I know about Tea—from very little things about how to hold something, for example, to deep and profound spiritual truths—that I *never* would have discovered on my own, not in a hundred lifetimes devoted to Tea. Ultimately, one must not give up: no matter where or who you are, don't ever abandon the hope that you can find a true teacher; and more importantly, don't ever let go of the fact that finding him or her is necessary. We all need guidance!

Unfortunately, one other drawback to the aforementioned free speech is that it also opens the gates to all the charlatans, profiteers and other negative influences. In fact, many Westerners are turned off from masters, and therefore never find one and make any progress, because they are either suspicious or have some experience with such a fraud. My father always says, "I'll never file my teeth and dye my hair purple, but I wouldn't want to live in a world where people weren't free to do so." Similarly, I think it is best to recognize such people, learn some discrimination, and then ignore

them—moving on to face our own destinies.

Our search is confused by any number of so-called masters with financial agendas, or control issues, etc.; and because of that, one important place to start one's search for a teacher has become a foundation of skepticism towards any teacher that has a financial interest in their teaching. There are all kinds of "masters" in Asia that subtly incorporate their business plans into their teaching. There are even formal institutions that charge large sums of money to "teach" you about Tea. They then have a Tea shop adjacent to or beneath their school, and since the class will all be using their tea and teaware, and you will be tested using it, "we suggest you pick some

up in order to practice properly." In essence, they charge you a fee to learn why their tea and teaware is superior, how to use it to brew tea, and then eventually how to graduate and go out in the world as a billboard that advertises their products to others. We know of several such teachers and groups.

All kinds of vendors have "information" portions of their online shop, website or blog which teach about Tea; but it all revolves around the reasons why *their* tea is better, how to brew *their* tea, where they got *their* tea, etc. Is it any wonder intelligent people get turned off? Despite that, I would still assert that the quest for a real teacher is worthwhile for two reasons: firstly, as Dogen said, you can't make true

"The disciple is like wood, and the teacher resembles a craftsman. Even if the wood is good, without a skilled craftsman its extraordinary beauty is not revealed. Even if the wood is bent, placed in skilled hands its splendid merits immediately appear. By this you should know that realization is genuine or false depending on whether the teacher is true or incompetent."

—Dogen-zenji, translated
by Kazuaki Tanahashi



progress without a teacher; and secondly, giving up simply because there are charlatans who want your money is a bit like never dating because you could get hurt. (I am very much a ‘better to have loved and lost’ kind of person.)

Master Dogen also said that if one is quiet, the “stream’s water will tell us of the source.” Eventually, in drinking a person’s Tea, one will find out the source of their wisdom, be it the Dao or a financial agenda—though it may take us a few sessions to catch on. Most of the highest masters in any Dao don’t charge money for teaching. In kung fu, for example, it has been forbidden since ancient times for the master to receive financial reimbursement of any kind, which will

only pollute the teaching. Once money enters into the equation, the baser human emotions—like greed, jealousy, etc.—also get involved, and these are the real pollutants. Things start getting modified, compromises made, and soon the Truth spirals away into organization. This is one of the reasons I have the utmost respect for this magazine, its founders and contributors.

That said, I personally believe that there is no problem combining what one loves most with one’s livelihood, but I think that if you are going to make money through tea, then just sell tea, plain and simple—don’t charge me to learn about it. I do know some genuine masters that make a living selling tea, but they don’t ever charge to learn about

it, and they rarely focus their lessons on why their tea is so much better than others, which leads me to another important point.

True masters never wish to possess their students. My master always says that “if you have a strong desire to have students, you’re not ready for them.” If the method my master is teaching is in fact the truth, why should he worry if I want to compare it to other methods? If a tea truly is better, it will stand up to a side-by-side comparison with an inferior tea. In fact, by exploring and testing principles, we not only develop faith in their efficacy, we also learn how to better appreciate their superiority. For that reason, my master doesn’t just allow me to seek out other teachers and teachings,

he encourages it. He loves when I come back with things I learned elsewhere, to discuss and compare. It shows growth. Masters who suggest that “Our way is the only way; there is no other”, and imply that to try another practice is to leave this one, are often insecure in their wisdom, for if it really was the best way, you wouldn’t need to worry about whether it could stand up to other traditions or not. As much as those who teach for financial reasons, there are those who do so for ego: they get their satisfaction from being above others, and want complete devotion from their students, as well as recognition of the fact that they are “higher”. The truly high masters I’ve met were all childlike, humble, modest and unaffected—the kind of people you could pass by very easily in a crowd. “The empty drum makes the most noise” as they say.

Now that we’ve gotten the negative stuff out of the way, let us turn to the positive: there are so many genuine Tea masters in the world, all with wide-open heart-kettles that are busy pouring cup after cup of wisdom as you read these very words; and many of them are in the most unlikely places. But you have to find them. They aren’t going to come and ring your doorbell. They are looking for you—that is true—though it is you who must go to them, and with an empty cup.

I think it is the same with high-end teas as it is with masters; and one of my teachers always says that, “as the man seeks the Leaf, the Leaf seeks the man.” You still have to go out and explore, though. You have to use your intuition, and approach each situation as a new and unique encounter. If you are too hung up on suspicions based on the negativities we discussed earlier, or past experience, you will close yourself off and drive away the real masters.

There are plenty of people who are willing to honor and respect them, to use the opportunity to develop their own humility, so why would the master want a disciple who will treat them suspiciously and argue with them? Be open to the idea that you can find a teacher, and go in search of them. If you follow your heart, you will find them and they will find you. In India, there is an ancient saying: “When the student is ready, the master will appear.”

If humility, devotion and respect were easy, we’d all be masters. It is hard to recognize your own lack. However, one fundamental preliminary to any kind of learning whatsoever is the implicit admission that *you don’t know*.

There are so many genuine Tea masters in the world, all with wide-open heart-kettles that are busy pouring cup after cup of wisdom as you read these very words; and many of them are in the most unlikely places. But you have to find them. They are looking for you—that is true—though it is you who must go to them, and with an empty cup.

There is no learning without this. If you already have the answer, what is there that anyone can teach you? I have seen many people walk right by a true master for this very reason; or, as I mentioned earlier, be handed a book or magazine like this one, full of great information, which they cast aside in favor of the sound of their own voice. Learning to listen, and learning itself, is one of the most difficult skills to master. Emerson said “It took me five years to learn to speak the English language and fifty to learn to hear it.” There is no point in going out to look for a teacher if you’re just going to dismiss him or her the moment you meet them.

Don’t get confused, though. As I said earlier, any true master will encourage rationality, healthy criticism and experiential understanding, allowing you to explore other media for information and come to your own conclusions. The true master only proves his or her worth when the student breaks free of him or her. If they remain students forever, then the teacher hasn’t done a very good job. Similarly, some educational philosophers suggest that students never fail, only teachers; and that the failure of a student to graduate can only reflect the effort, or lack thereof, of the teacher. While that argument may be a bit strong in some delinquent cases, I agree with the fundamental spirit of it: the real master wants his or her students to have a so-called “graduation”—for lack of a better term—and go off on their own to develop their own wisdom, eventually becoming a master themselves with their own students. That is how the tree seeds and spreads.

In the end, you can’t complain that you have no teacher if you aren’t open to expanding your search, or if you feel your cup is full and that you already know the answer. The willingness to travel is the first step in any journey. How far would you go to find a Tea master? To achieve mastery yourself? For it is my opinion—and far more importantly, the opinion of such great masters as Dogen-zenji—that without such a teacher, you’ll never find the inner sanctum and progress in real understanding towards the point at which you can participate in and create your own path towards artistry. May all of you who haven’t already, find such a kind-hearted guide to lead you to the place where *Tea and Zen are of one flavor*.





一
氣
呵
成

KETTLE IN THE OFF-HAND

-Wu De

Now and then, it is important to return to the basics. This is the third part in our series on the Five Basics of Tea Brewing. While these principles also apply to bowl tea, they are primary in gongfu brewing as well.

Over the last two months we have been discussing the Five Basics of Tea Brewing. Strengthening the roots of any practice helps strengthen the tree. The deeper the roots are, the richer the nutrients and the more lush the crown. It is therefore important to return now and again to our beginnings and refine our foundation. This also helps to keep us humble, so that we remember where we've come from and how much we've grown. Often times, when you look back at the basics from years of practice, you find that you see so many new facets to them that you hadn't noticed when you first started. With an open, beginner's mind we can continue to grow and expand our gongfu, no matter how far we've come in our Tea journey.

Though these Five Basics of Tea Brewing are applicable to all tea practices and brewing methods, they are paramount to gongfu tea. The only difference is that other brewing styles, like leaves in a bowl, end at the Five Basics of Tea Brewing, while gongfu tea, on the other hand, builds on them—exploring more refined techniques and sensitivity as well. Still, they are as important for

a gongfu practice as for any tea practice.

So far, we've talked about separating the tea table down the middle and doing everything on the right side with the right hand and vice versa. This helps us stay balanced, front and center, which is very important energetically. It is also rude in Asian cultures to turn one's back on guests. The most important aspect of this principle, though, is that it protects our teaware. In decades of tea brewing, the number one reason I have seen for teaware getting knocked over and/or broken is due to reaching across the table with the opposite hand, which leaves the teapot in a blind spot that you can easily hit when you return to an upright posture.

Then, last month we talked about all the circular movements in tea brewing, and there are many, like filling the pot with water or pouring the tea into the cups, etc. All of the circular movements done with the left hand should be clockwise, and with the right hand, counter-clockwise. An easier way to remember this is that the circular movements are towards the center. This is to do with the ergonomics of our body

and the natural energy flow from our center to our wrists/hands. Hopefully you tried the experiment last month and are ready to move on to the third basic.

The third Basic of Tea Brewing is to do with the kettle: *always put the kettle on the off-hand side and use the off-hand to handle the kettle*. This means that if you are right-handed, the kettle should be on your left side, and that you should always use your left hand to pour water. If you are left-handed, then the kettle goes on the right side. There are many reasons why this is an important basic of all tea brewing. If you have made a habit of picking up the kettle with the strong hand, you will want to break it as soon as possible.

The first practical reason why we hold the kettle in our off-hand is something we talked about briefly when we discussed the first Basic of Tea Brewing, which is that it is important that our tea brewing be balanced. Studies have shown that people are often much more efficient and stronger with the hand they use more often, especially right-handed people (lefties are more ambidextrous). In fact, many of us live life as though our

off-hand were some kind of evolutionary vestige like the tail bone, rarely using it to do anything at all. Occasionally our off-hand lends a bit of support to our activities, but rarely do we choose to balance our day-to-day actions in a centered way that is in harmony with the activity itself. One insightful practice you might try is to spend a Saturday doing everything with two hands, seeing what understanding arises as a result. Some students have tried spending a whole day doing every little thing with two hands, and have realized how mindlessly many activities are done, and just how off-keel their bodies are, along with many other insights...

Brewing tea should be balanced from the center of the body, the “*dan tian*, 丹田”. When we breathe and move from our core, the energy comes from our heart-center and changes the whole way we relate to the tea-brewing process. By using our off-hand to manipulate the heaviest object in brewing, we help strengthen it and bring more balance to both sides of our body. In that way, energy (Qi) begins to flow evenly through both arms and the brewing is motivated differently.

The most important reason for using the off-hand to hold the kettle, though, has to do with fluency. Smoothness and fluency in brewing are the most relevant factors of

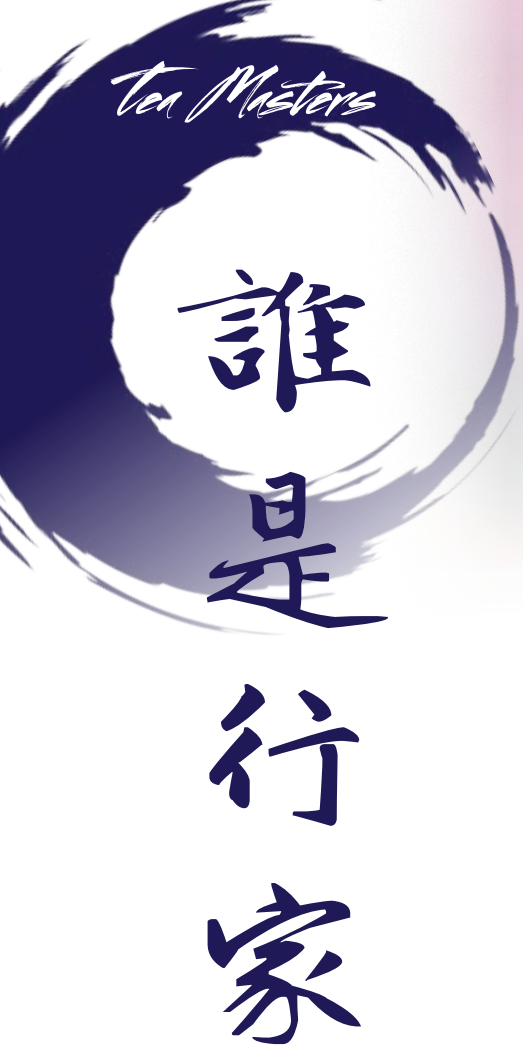
gongfu tea, which is why this basic is the one that is most applicable to a gongfu brewing methodology. The others relate equally to all types of tea brewing. But as you progress in gongfu tea, you find that smoothness and fluency really influence the quality of the cup. Remember our discussions of the poem, which preserves the methodology of this tradition? The final line of the poem is “everything is finished in one breath.” If you recall, this is the most difficult line to translate because it literally translates to “everything is finished in one *Qi*.” While this line does relate to breath, it also refers to the fact that everything should be done in one *energy*—in one movement, without hesitation or discord. Everything should flow smoothly, in other words.

Almost everyone inherently knows that the pot should be in the strong hand—even if it is an Yixing pot which can be used by either hand. This is energetically important. If you also put the kettle in the strong hand, the brewing itself becomes clunky, with many stops and starts. To brew in this way, you have to pick the kettle up and fill the pot, set the kettle down and then pick up the pot with that same hand. There is an awkward pause between each movement, and the left side of the body is uninvolved

(or the right side for lefties). When you use the off-hand to handle the kettle there is much greater fluency. You can pick up the kettle with the off-hand and remove the lid from the pot with the strong hand. Then you fill the pot and at the instant the off-hand is returning the kettle, the strong hand has already lifted the pot to start pouring into the cups. This is much smoother and without hesitation. It is all one movement, in other words. The real importance of this basic is based in such smooth, graceful fluency: *If fluency in tea brewing matters to you, then the kettle should be held by the off-hand.*

Whether you have been using the off-hand or not, this month's experiment involves using both. Try using two identical cups and do two different steepings back to back: one in which the kettle is in the off-hand and another holding it in the strong hand. Steep the tea quickly both times so that both cups are relatively the same temperature. Try to notice the difference in the smoothness and fluency of the process itself. Then, after the two steepings, try the two cups of tea side by side. Are they different? Is one smoother? Can you recognize the difference in them? As usual, we are excited to hear about your insights: globalteahut@gmail.com





WHO IS A TEA EXPERT?

-Wu De

In many Zen traditions, there is a wonderful appreciation for the beginner's mind. Such a mind is open and awake, humble and alert. A beginner's mind is fertile and free, with an unbounded enthusiasm for growth. The expert, on the other hand, thinks he knows and therefore stops looking. This is an essential teaching for progressing along any Way..

There is an ancient tradition of students serving Tea to their master, and if she accepts, it is a symbol of her acceptance of the student as well. In our courses, we sometimes tell the students this and then drop a *koan* into the center of the room: *Why then am I serving you Tea?* There is always a stunned silence as they await the answer that will thunder and lightning the darkness into sudden clarity, like any good answer to a *koan* should. Do you see the answer? Pause and think about it...

The resolution is always a focus on what is already there—a look into simplicity and presence: *The real teacher is always Tea.* We are here to learn from Her, and the Nature out of which She speaks. Prepar-

ing Tea is indeed a way of bowing before our master and asking Her acceptance. And you'll know when She takes you in, accepts you...

In many Zen traditions, there is a wonderful appreciation for the beginner's mind. Such a mind is open and awake, humble and alert. A beginner's mind is fertile and free, with an unbounded enthusiasm for growth. The expert, on the other hand, thinks he knows and therefore stops looking. The Sage said the ocean is the most powerful force in the world because it puts itself beneath all others. Humility is real strength, as it allows for limitless potentiality.

All good teachers are also good students. Rikyu designed his Tea-room to have a very small entrance,

which was based on some humble fishermen's huts he had seen near the coast. Everyone—lord, merchant or peasant—had to bow down and crawl inside, leaving their pride with their shoes at the door. This is the spirit of Tea. We wash the teaware and tea as a symbol of this: removing the dust of the world. We are all monks and nuns in this space, having set down our masks, egos, social statuses, financial statuses, etc.

Nothing can hinder your journey down any path as much as thinking you already know. To know is to dismiss; to fail to see the unique beauty of each moment. The world of Tea is vast and deep, and a thousand lifetimes would never be enough. When you go to a farm and see masters shaking the oolong leaves, you



may think it looks easy; but when you try it, you will realize just how difficult it is, and how long it would take to master. Does this make the farmer who has mastered such processing skills a Tea expert? Others write books on the history of Tea, or the kinds of Tea and their processing. Are they Tea experts? There are merchants that have learned a lot of information about Tea. They can satisfy your curiosity about most Tea matters in an amazing way. Are they Tea experts? And what about the monk, deep in the mountains? He has never processed Tea and doesn't have much Tea history or information, but he can brew Tea like no other. His hands move with a great calmness and fluidity that betray

decades of practice and skill. Is he a Tea expert?

Actually, finding confidence and capability in any skill—including Tea—is only an intermediate stage. We start out so beautifully: with radiantly open eyes, full of fervor to learn more about Tea. Then we begin to learn some information and develop some skill in preparation. Perhaps we travel and learn about tea mountains, or even participate in some tea processing. This is all wonderful. We now have the ability to share tea with others. We can articulate our experiences and begin to travel deeper into Tea. Our Leaf begins to communicate to us and we start to embody the spirit of Tea. But mastery only begins when we come full circle and embrace

the not-knowing. The difference between the innocence of the child and that of the master is vast, however. The child is pure and bright, but soon an ego will grow and the innocence will be lost. The master brings consciousness and awareness to innocence. He represents innocence that *knows* it's innocent. This is very much in harmony with our human purpose, our Dao. Nature has always been beautiful; it has always been serene. We bring awareness to this. Through us, Nature is beautiful and *knows* it's beautiful. Through us Nature is serene and *knows* it's serene.

Osho often said there are three kinds of fools in the world: the simple fools, who don't know and don't know that they don't know.

They are ignorant. The complex fool is what we all become after years of education. The complex fool also doesn't know, but he *thinks* he does. The last kind of fool is the blessed fool, who knows that he doesn't know. In his words: "The blessed fool has the greatest possibility of understanding because he has come to know that knowledge is futile, he has come to know that all knowledge is a barrier to knowing. Knowledge is a barrier to knowing, so he drops all knowledge and becomes a pure knower. He simply attains to clarity of vision. His eyes are empty of theories and thoughts. His mind is no more a mind; his mind is just intelligence, pure intelligence. His mind is no longer cluttered with junk; his mind is no longer cluttered

with borrowed knowledge. He is simply aware. He is a flame of awareness."

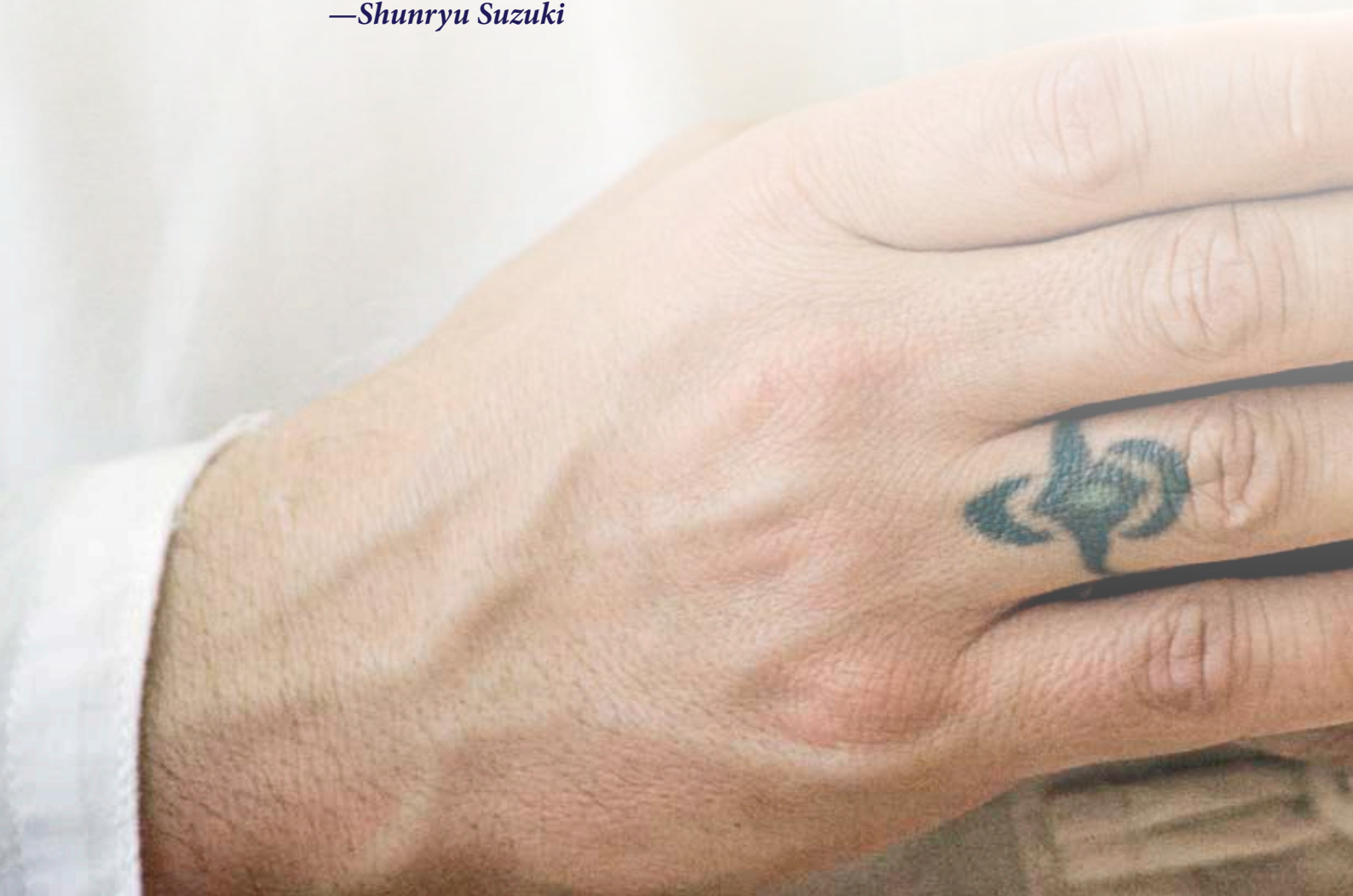
After the intermediate stage, we return to a state where we don't need to show off anymore. We are as interested in learning as we are in sharing, and in learning from the sharing. The master no longer wants or needs to be an expert. Others may see her this way, but she definitely doesn't feel that way or live from that space. She rests in intelligence.

The Cha part of Cha Dao is the easy part. It's the Dao that is hard. And all the best teaware and tea information won't change people if it is prepared with pride. A simple bowl might leave a much greater and longer-lasting impression. This

isn't to say that Tea information is useless. There is a lot to learn and enjoy in learning about teas, their history, where they come from and how they are made. But without Dao in equal measure, everything becomes expertise, everything becomes a competition. Which tea is better? Which is worse? Your brewing is better than hers, and hers is better than his. The comparative mind has its place, and discrimination definitely plays a role in our growth, but when it consumes us it leads to snobbery and we forget that the most important aspect of all Tea—from history to production, preparation to spirit—the greatest part of good Tea is heart!

*"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities,
but in the expert's there are few..."*

—Shunryu Suzuki



Simple bowl tea prepared from out a pure heart will be wonderful, and we'll connect through it. The best teas prepared in condescension and pride will leave us separate, and often argumentative. After thousands of tea sessions, we find the ones with heart to be the most memorable, not the fanciest or most expensive.

The fact is that there are no Tea experts. Stay in a state of intelligence. Don't ever lose the passion for exploration and growth. Don't ever stop learning. In Japan, this practice is called "*kaizen*". Keep this word and its virtue with you always. *Kaizen* means that we remain students, choosing to learn something even on our last days alive. It means that we don't ever put boundaries

around our limitless souls. There is infinite creativity and growth in us all. Never limit your own potential in Tea. Practice growing and learning. All situations are either teachers or teachings. The people we meet and the different teas we drink are here to teach us or to be teachings themselves. And even when we get to the point where we start teaching others, sharing our wisdom, there is still a great learning in that process.

Paradoxically, we can only achieve mastery of Tea when we let go of the desire to master anything. When we put ourselves beneath the Tea and bow down, it will flow into us. And then it will flow through us and help change others as well. In surrendering to our limitless growth, and wearing *kaizen* as a talisman

near our hearts, Tea begins to find its way in through the cracks in our ego—prying them apart so that the light can shine through, the light of the world. And in that ancient starlight, we find the warmth of our true home...



Light Meets Life

2015 PUERH CAKES

INNER PATH

Each year we produce some puerh cakes to help raise money to build your permanent center, Light Meets Life. Light Meets Life will be in the mountains of Miao Li. We hope to be able to have up to fifteen permanent residents and around forty guests on any given day. None of the proceeds from these cakes will be used towards maintaining our current center, Tea Sage Hut. This year, the quality of the teas we were able to find went up a notch, starting with this beautiful brick!



The first of our 2015 Light Meets Life cakes is here! We are unbelievably excited about all of our cakes this year. The others will come shortly. This one came early because it is an aged shou, and one of our all-time favorites, which we shared with you in February. That's right, the first of our teas this year is Inner Path!

When we contacted our brother saying that Inner Path was one of our favorite shou teas and that we'd like to make something similar this year, he got back to us suggesting that we just take Inner Path itself, since there was around 350 cakes left. We quickly purchased them and had them wrapped with Light Meets Life wrappers! We are so happy that this year's teas are all moving up in quality from the previous two years' puerh drives. Inner Path is such an excellent tea, and we are all very fortunate to have the chance to get some more of this amazing tea. Each

250-gram brick will be a minimum donation of US 40\$ + shipping. Check the website for more information!

Inner Path is a great blend of various teas from Mengku, Lincang, Yunnan. The tea was purchased by a small boutique for private production in 2007. The leaves were of various sizes, from grade three to nine. This large spectrum, from smaller buds to larger, old-growth leaves was common back in the day. (7572 is one famous example, which we have sent out in Global Tea Hut. It has an average leaf size of 7.) This *maocha* was aged in Jinggu for five years before it was piled, which is unique for modern shou tea. Jinggu is a decent place to age tea in Yunnan, as it is more humid than the capital, or even Mengku where this tea originated.

The five-year-old *maocha* was fermented/piled to a lesser degree than most shou teas nowadays, leav-

ing room for change and growth. This also means that the process was watched and managed with more care and skill. Stopping the fermentation earlier isn't always the best way to make shou, but it does ensure a greater degree of concern and care for the process, which has to be watched constantly as a result. Also, the reason that inferior, left-over, heavily blended teas have always been used to make shou puerh is that it is inferior to aged sheng. It lacks the vibrancy and Qi, and much of the healing medicine can be lost in the piling of puerh tea. Shou tea is therefore cheaper than young or especially aged sheng puerh. For that reason, good old-growth material is rarely used, since it would mean that a vendor had to sell their shou cakes for the same price as sheng, which few customers will pay. Some would also say it would be a waste of quality leaves to

pile them, as their potential is much greater as aged sheng.

It is also difficult to find truly clean, chemical-free shou puerh tea, since it is often made up of leftovers, usually from various regions. The exceptions are always small productions made by tea lovers. This shou is made from a small batch of better leaves, including old-growth, intentionally aged and piled. And aged in an environment that was suitable for their evolution. Part of why this cake was able to have old-growth tea and still remain affordable is that the leaves are larger, lower-down, thinner and bigger leaves, called “*huang pian*, 黃片”. In our tea, these were blended with other kinds of leaves, bringing some depth and Qi and a nice, balanced flavor.

While aged *maocha* can be piled to make shou, you have to com-

press the tea right after the piling. Aged loose-leaf shou can't be compressed, as the tea leaves would resist the steam and not hold shape. Our tea was aged in Jinggu for five years and then piled for around thirty days before compression, all in Jinggu County. Then, the tea lovers producing these teas aged the cakes themselves for another two years before selling them and/or sharing them with friends. So the tea is seven or eight years old from one perspective—if you think of its birth in terms of harvest—or, only three years old if you count from when it was compressed. Either way, the whole process, from selecting and blending the teas to aging them in Jinggu, then in piling them with more intention and for only a month, and then in aging the cakes themselves for two years to allow

them to mellow out and lose the piling flavors—all of this was done with a love for Tea and a desire to make a great shou puerh. It's no wonder this is one of our favorites!

This magical tea lights up a day, with a sweet and thick liquor that tastes of camphor, mushrooms and Taiwanese black sugar. We find the Qi of this magical tea to be surprisingly uplifting for a shou, though we still feel grounded. It isn't as Yin as most shou. It is great in the afternoon or early evening, helping transition from day to night. Drinking it really feels like a journey inward...





LIN PING XIANG

The Last of the Tea Immortals

-Wu De

It is hard to overestimate the influence a person can have on this world, and often through the smallest of deeds. Sometimes a smile or a cup of tea can change the world. And Master Lin has shared a thousand, thousand cups with Tea lovers around the world. We honor his generosity and Tea spirit by pouring cups with the same open-heartedness he's taught us, paying forward his many gifts.

Holding up an old Ming Dynasty tea jar, a sparkle glimmers in his eyes. “Still in love after all these years!” he exclaims. The old jar is simple earthenware that nine out of ten people would probably pass by without remark—warbled and asymmetrical, it has a simplicity that belies hidden beauties beyond or within what some would call defects. But a true love sees through the flaws, finding endearment in the imperfections. Just as some widowers find that what they miss most about their departed companion is all the quirks and foibles that distinguished their character, Master Lin has with every passing year grown fonder and fonder of his old jar and all that surrounds the Leaf it contains. And in the moment when he held up that old vase, the shimmer in his eyes was a window into a lifetime devoted to Tea.

Looking back on all the precious time I have spent with this living master, Lin Ping Xiang, I see

in it the apprenticeship and transmission of a kind of Zen spirit, as it's told in so many of the tales that have inspired my journey. They say that Zen began when the Buddha and his students were sitting for evening discourse on Vulture's Peak. After some silence, crackling with expectation, he held up a single lotus. That was his sermon. And one monk, Mahakasyapa, understood the lesson. From that unspoken transmission, the spirit of Zen was handed down. This wordless way is always steeping in and pouring out around Master Lin, waiting to be drunk by those who come with empty cups. And yet, he is like that Ming vase: outwardly simple and unremarkable. You'd pass him by on a street, unless your eyes were tuned to that something else—those hidden beauties resting just beyond and within the ordinary. You can talk to him for hours about the most banal things—how's so and so, or this tea and that—and yet find yourself leav-

ing the conversation transformed, with a new perspective on life, especially as seen through the lens of the so-called “commonplace”.

There is a story of a young monk that ordained long ago in Japan. He was one of only three apprentices at a small temple. Day in and day out, the monks worked and meditated in relative quiet. The young monk felt frustrated that his master didn't teach more. There was the occasional lecture, but it wasn't enough. After some time, he asked permission to leave and travel, which was granted. As he traveled the length of Japan, seeking other temples and masters, each abbot would ask him where he'd come from and who he'd ordained under. When he'd tell them his master's name, in every place north to south, they'd exclaim that his master was the most enlightened teacher in Japan—congratulating him on how lucky he was to study with such a one. This baffled the young monk.



Everywhere he was met with laudatory compliments for his master, the very same teacher he'd found wanting. After enough of this, he realized he'd missed something and decided to head back to his master's temple. When he arrived, he asked his old teacher, "Master, I studied here for two years and you never taught me your Zen. Everywhere I traveled, I was met with renown for your understanding of Zen. Was I unworthy? Why didn't you teach me?" The old master smiled, "*Never taught you my Zen?* Did I not wash my bowl after meals? Did I not lay the coals for tea while you gathered water?"

Like the young monk, I see many people pass by Master Lin without noticing the way he sees, the way he walks or the way he unpacks his bag full of tea and teaware. At first it feels like a shame, but then I remember that he wants it that way, and of course he does. Master Lin is more of a Daoist sage. The Zen filters are mine. But in this case, the treasure in the common cup is an insight they both share. There are also plenty of Daoist tales of seekers who head up into the mountains looking for the sage. On the way, they stop and ask a woodcutter or fisherman for directions. He points them along... They never find the immortal, and return home dejected. Later, they tell the friend who met the sage—the one who sent them on their trip—that they couldn't find any immortals in the mountains, "only a simple woodcutter." The surprise in such stories always comes when they describe the woodcutter to their friend, only to find out that *he* was the sage! Master Lin is that woodcutter-sage: a simple, down-to-earth guy you share some tea and a chat with. And if you ask him for directions, he'll steer you away from himself to some other empty spot in the woods. Then, you'll return dejected,

only to find out the simple Tea master was the sage!

If you come to Master Lin looking for spiritual teachings you won't find any. But that's only because he *is* a spiritual teaching. He doesn't talk about how to live, he lives it. He talks about Tea. And if you want to learn about Tea, you won't find a more knowledgeable source! He is an encyclopedia of forty years of Tea knowledge. He can tell you firsthand how each tea is made, where it comes from, how to store it, brew it and appreciate its dry and wet leaves, liquor, fragrance and mouthfeel.

Master Lin is that woodcutter-sage: a simple, down-to-earth guy you share some tea and a chat with. And if you ask him for directions, he'll steer you away from himself to some other empty spot in the woods. Then, you'll return dejected, only to find out the simple Tea master was the sage!

He'll articulate sensations in your mouth that you never even noticed were there until he named them, drawing your attention to aspects of a tea you were missing out on—aspects that you now enjoy so much you wonder how you ever lived without them. He truly loves Tea. Whenever I ask him why he makes such great Tea, he always answers, "I just love Tea!" And that isn't just a witty response. The insight is an appreciation of the fact that real mastery has to come out of love. Nowadays, it's a rare thing to meet a master who has thrown himself so completely into his passion and Way. It takes a deep and lasting love to appreciate something so profoundly for decades, devoting your life to it. Master Lin's love of Tea is contagious. Every time I return home from some time with him, I brew more tea and with more verve and a love rekindled. He inspires

me. And, oh God, with moist eyes, I can't help but write that I love him for it. With all of my being.

If you leave more informed about tea and inspired to brew more, he'll be happiest. But from him, you can also learn the deepest of spiritual lessons, just not in the words you are used to hearing. To do that, you have to shift. You have to see the Ming Dynasty jar the way he does. You have to notice the way he walks, the way he sits down; the way he looks at you approvingly or disapprovingly depending on your mind. You have to really see through the woodcutter to see the immortal.

And then, many more and deeper lessons are transmitted. From him, I have learned how to live Tea—not just *brew* it, but really *live* it. I've learned to love simplicity, and to guard my life from clutter. His teachings on how many teapots you should have apply to all material things. You may not notice that he doesn't have a cell phone, and never has, but I've noticed. The

way he navigates life in a modern, complicated world, and does so with grace and wisdom, is a teaching of the highest order. All too often, we pass by the common things—the rocks and trees, shafts of sunlight through a window, etc.—looking for so-called "higher" states, places or teachers. But the best teachers are often right under our noses. Master Lin and the Tea spirit he embodies have taught me to find the spiritual *in* the world, and to cultivate a love for the ordinary. As I walk that journey, I realize more and more that there is no "ordinary", only glory and magic. The so-called "spiritual" life is *this* life, if it is anything at all!

The true master doesn't have disciples because he wants to lead them, but because he has so much to share he is overflowing. He doesn't have any private ambitions for his students. He is not a master of them, but of himself.



His every gesture is a teaching. And in his eyes, the student finds their own truth mirrored. In his presence, they feel more present themselves. As the inner stillness increases, the student comes to understand that the power was never “outside”; it was always in the self. And that is when the transmission happens. The master was being himself, and that radiance helped create a sun-field in which the student’s inner seeds could sprout. Then, the student realizes that the master they’ve always sought looks just like them!

A Life of Tea Is Born

Lin Ping Xiang was born in the Year of the Horse 1954, in the small town of Kuala Pilah. His father was a rubber estate foreman who migrated to Malaysia at the age of fourteen from Meizhou, Guang Dong, China. He came along with his brothers to start a new life. Master Lin never met his grandparents, since they stayed behind in China. His mother was Malaysian Chinese. As he grew up, Tea was always around, a part of the everyday life of simple Chinese working class people. Master Lin’s family was poor, but it didn’t matter because there

wasn’t another side of the fence to look across. Everyone lived meagerly. It was another time, one that seems softer and harder at the same time, at least from the photos of his generation.

He was a good, well-behaved child—the youngest and favorite of the family. “Even my sister loved me so; what to say of my mother and father!” He was obedient, keeping to himself. When he was in the fourth grade, the family moved to Bahau, a small town near where he was born. They stayed there until Master Lin was in middle school. Then they moved again, this time to Kuantan, on the east coast of Malaysia. Master Lin was a great student. Even today, he has one of the sharpest memories of anyone I know, especially when it comes to Tea information. He remembers data, quotes, poems and numbers in great detail, and sometimes you’re left in awe, wishing you had your notebook as he lists the chemical composition of porcelain glazes, the degrees of firing and other minute details of their production, and then recites word for word three ancient Chinese poems about them in the stride of a single paragraph! You can see the lifelong destiny of a great teacher echoing

back through his years as a brilliant student, for great teachers are always great students. A teacher has a lot to teach because he’s learned a lot. When he was a young man, Master Lin’s Chinese was excellent compared to most of the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. And since much of Master Lin’s professional life was devoted to language, it’s worth discussing further.

Chinese immigrants first started coming to Malaysia when the British controlled the peninsula to work in the tin mines and other estates there. Master Lin’s father actually worked as foremen under British management. At that time, their children and grandchildren started studying in English schools, though there were always Mandarin schools as well. Parents often chose English-medium schools to give their children an advantage. Mandarin students like Master Lin, who studied at Chinese-medium schools until the sixth grade, had to take an extra year of English before they could go on to middle school. I’ve always found Malaysians to be the most amazing polyglots. It is not uncommon to meet people who can speak six or seven languages proficiently.



A young Master Lin, traveling and teaching Tea in the 1980's



Master Lin is one such example: his parents are ethnically Hakka people, so Hakkanese is his mother tongue. He's also very proficient in Mandarin, of course, and has learned fluent Cantonese, which is the language the majority of Malaysian Chinese speak. Like most Malaysians, he also studied in English schools and therefore is fluent in English as well. And, of course, all Malaysians learn some Bahasa Melayu in school. Usually, the Chinese people are modest and say their English "isn't good" or that they only speak a "little" Bahasa, but their English is amongst the best I've encountered in my travels, and from the conversations I have seen Master Lin and others have with native Malays over the years, I'd say they are as proficient in that language as well.

Though most Malaysian Chinese speak an incredible amount of languages, and do so well, they often can't read or write Chinese

since they attended British schools. For that reason, a lot of them have tutors. Master Lin started tutoring those in grades beneath him at the age of seventeen. He says he drank tea every day during that time, and loved it as a beverage. He left home at the age of nineteen to take what Malaysians call "pre-university" classes in Kuala Lumpur, studying for two years. The tutoring, often over tea, had helped him decide that he wanted to be a teacher. Instead of university, Master Lin moved to Johor Bahru, the southernmost state in Malaysia. During that time, he started his first martial art, Tae Kwon Do. Students had to choose between Tai Chi, Tae Kwon Do or football for physical education. He jokes that only girls took Tai Chi and Chinese were terrible at football, so there was really only one choice left. After completing his training to become a Mandarin teacher, he says he was luckily

posted to a junior high school outside Kuantan, which he considers to be his hometown.

A Tea Sage

In the 1970's, a young Master Lin started to notice Tea more and more. He fell in love with the Black Dragon, oolong, from his very first soar. He tried some amazing Dong Ding teas from Taiwan, which were expensive, at the homes of some of the wealthier classmates he tutored in high school. He said it struck him like love at first sight. Otherwise, he drank the more available teas from the now famous Sea Dyke Company of Xiamen, which exported Tie Guan Yin from Anxi and Cliff Tea from Wuyi. During his teacher training, he and his classmates started to actively seek out different teas. If you have a Tea conversation of any duration with Master Lin,



you'll soon see that many sentences start with "In those days..." I can never get enough of hearing about "those days". In fact, I usually lean forward when I hear that, knowing that what follows will be interesting or important... "*In those days*, there were different grades of tea, and it was easy to learn about tea because they wouldn't cheat you." As we've discussed regularly in these pages, the quality/grade/price was much more honest than the market nowadays. "Sea Dyke had the grades AT104 and AT204 for their Tie Guan Yin teas. The 'AT' stood for "*Amoi Tea*"—*Amoi* is Xiamen. The former cost 7.50 Ringgit (US 2\$) and the latter 2.40 Ringgit (US 65 cents). Most tea merchants survived selling red teas, which were popular due to British influence, with a few oolongs as well. Actually, most all teas were good in the early 1970's—even the supermarket had Wuyi teas!" The more expensive tea cost

a lot in terms of a middle school teacher's modest income. But what baffled Master Lin was that he actually enjoyed the lower grades more. And he says that the question of why the higher-grade teas were better is what launched his Tea journey in earnest.

From the question of the higher and lower grade oolongs—a story I have heard from him many times, and could relish many times more—we always segue to one of his favorite topics: gross and subtle, and their relationship to quality. He says that eventually, after years of gongfu tea, he learned that the higher-grade teas were subtler and that he was mis-brewing them. "The lower-grade teas were neither this nor that. They just had a thicker, stronger liquor, which confused me. I knew the difference was in me. I had to hone my skills. Now it is easy. Something to give a kick or a punch, more on the

surface, was what I wanted then. I couldn't capture something so subtle or fine." The journey of learning any art is always from the gross to the subtle. When we are less sensitive, the stronger more potent versions stimulate us more, but as we move deeper into nuances it's the subtler, refined aspects that allow us to explore deeper and richer worlds. In perfume or incense, for example, low-quality fragrances are strong and in the front. High-grade fragrances are subtle, felt more in the back of the nasal cavity, and often not smelled until after you calm down. But that subtlety allows for much more smooth and lasting experiences, as well as room for many middle and undertones that provide a richer experience. And that is as true for Tea as it is for fragrances. The best teas are subtle and delicate. They aren't so forgiving; they require skill to brew. When you do taste a



Master Lin teaching at the Victoria & Albert Museum, England, in 2000

fine tea, though, it's life-changing. One of Master Lin's most famous quotes is: "Tasting is believing. If and until you try a fine tea, it's too hard to tell!" And understanding that Tea rewards those who brew Her well entices many a Tea lover into her arms. A lot of us began our journeys with just such an invitation.

By the early 1980's, Master Lin was already brewing fine gongfu tea. In 1983, he met his teacher; a Taiwanese who would often visit Malaysia named Wu Guo Zhong. Master Wu was a student of one of China's greatest modern masters: Cheng Man Ching. Knowing that we are connected to that great lineage honors us all. Master Lin had moved to Kuala Lumpur doing various odd jobs. Alongside his tutoring, which he continued until 2001, Master Lin worked in insurance and even timber construction. In the mid and late-eighties, he also began traveling to lecture freely on Tea and tea preparation. "Many guests would think they were going to hear an old man lecture, but I was still young then. That surprised them... Aged Old Bush *Xue Shian* (Water

Fairy) was my favorite tea then. Of course, in seeking out aged Wuyi tea, we also found a lot of aged Liu Bao and puerh. But Cliff Tea was my true love. She still is now!" At that same time, Master Lin began reading Tea literature, including the English book by John Blofeld, which he says was very influential on his journey. His newfound Tai Chi practice and Mandarin teaching experience helped make him a great Tea guide as well. By then, he was already a Chajin, with a deep passion for Tea and the same generous spirit we all admire today. You could say that such kindness defines a man of Tea.

Tea Art Tea House

In 1988, Master Lin and his friends opened the Tea Art Tea House in Kuala Lumpur, starting a full-time life of Tea. "Sometimes I would brew tea for some guests and then when they'd leave I would think about going out to get a bite to eat or take rest. After locking up, I would head down the stairs only to find another group of peo-

ple dropping in for tea. They'd turn me around and we'd head back up for more tea... And students would come to me with their life problems, as well. Being a teacher was a joy, but also hard work. Sometimes I had to sacrifice all my private time." Many Tea lovers came to that tea house to learn Tea from him, noticing already the mastery in his brewing. Around that time, he was also asked to be an advisor to one of the largest tea companies in Malaysia called "Purple Cane."

After his tea house closed in 1993, Master Lin went back to tutoring Chinese and making tea at home. He continued teaching Tea, traveling and acting as advisor to several tea houses around Malaysia. "Over the years, I officiated the opening of so many tea houses. And sadly, I've watched many close, too. In Taiwan, people live in small apartments so a tea house culture can thrive. But in Malaysia, people feel they can drink tea at home and the ambience will be better than at a tea house." A year later, in 1994, he met his closest friend and a bright "rising star" of a student, Henry Yiow. Henry was at that time, and still is, a great *chêf* with a passion for Tea. Henry is also from Kuantan, where he would later return to open a tea shop. (We plan to devote a whole article to Henry in a future issue, so we won't spoil too much.) Suffice it to say, the two have been working, teaching, traveling, giving and sharing tea for the last twenty years since. And Henry's a great student, exemplifying his teacher's grace in his own life. He knows a lot about Tea, brews a great cup and shares Master Lin's love for kindness and generosity. He's also one of my best friends.

Teaching in the U.K.

Master Lin has taught in England four times, starting in 1996 when he lectured in Bristol. He went again two times in 2000,



Cheng Man Ching was the last of a dying breed said to be widespread in ancient China: he was a scholar, a sage, a traditional Chinese doctor and a master martial artist. They say that such men were common in dynastic China. Whether or not that is true, few survived into the modern era, and none as influential as this great master. Of course, it goes without saying, Master Cheng was also a Chajin. He loved brewing oolong tea gongfu.

Master Cheng was born in rural Chekiang Province, present day Wen Chou, in 1901. His father died at a very young age. He was said to be an exceptionally bright young boy, and the whole village had ambitions for him. But at the age of nine, a brick fell on his head, knocking the young boy into a coma. A Daoist master wandering by took notice and revived him with herbs. When he came to, he had lost all his memory. Later, his mother apprenticed him to a local artist to sweep, clean up and grind ink.

One day, the artist's wife asked the boy to paint something. He demurred, saying that he'd never tried. After she insisted, he grabbed the brush and put it to paper. Out flowed a glorious wisteria in a single stroke. His teacher was amazed. When young Cheng arrived to the studio the next morning, he found an inscription from his master on his painting declaring him an artist in his own right.

Master Cheng went on to become one of the most famous painters, poets and calligraphers in China. In his mid twenties he began teaching at university. He also developed a severe and seemingly incurable case of tuberculosis. At that time, a friend introduced him to the famous Tai Chi teacher Yang Cheng Pu. After a year of herbs and Tai Chi, the tuberculosis was cured and he never had symptoms again. This spurred an interest in the young artist to study Tai Chi and Traditional Chinese Medicine, both of which he later mastered enough to teach.

In 1949, Master Cheng moved with other literati to Taiwan to escape communist persecution. Throughout the rest of his life he organized several poetry, art, medicine and martial art societies. He also co-founded the National Chinese Medical Association. He lectured extensively in Taiwan, Asia and even the West on the classics of Daoism, Tai Chi and Chinese Medicine. He had a deep spiritual practice, an artistic talent and was a gifted healer and martial artist. The grand master passed away on March 26, 1975 in Taipei, leaving behind many students around the world.

giving lectures and workshops at the Victoria & Albert Museum. He was then invited back at the end of that same year by Lipton to come teach about Chinese tea, as they were launching three Chinese teas there. He gave lectures and brewed gongfu tea in nine cities around the kingdom. He says that Lipton was kind to him, leaving him free to talk on the topics he wished and to promote the art of Chinese Tea. *"In those days, we would teach about Tea anywhere and everywhere we were invited to, sometimes to political parties in Malaysia, even though we*

didn't really know anything about their politics."

Master Lin is full of amazing one-liners that pour out of him in the exact same tone and phrasing every time, like the measured, graceful—because they are so practiced—movements of his tea brewing. In fact, he can even say them in Chinese and English, and often does so at the same time. I adore his smile when he recites one of his quotes, like a Chinese orator from the Qing Dynasty, floating back and forth from Chinese to English. And you can always feel the way such pithy sayings affect the listen-

ers in the room, in the way people turn inward smilingly when they hear beautiful music. Whenever he talks about his trips to England, he says things like: "Tea is the Eastern antidote to Western stress." Like others in his generation, Master Lin was technically born in the British Empire, since Malaysia achieved independence in 1957. He was therefore honored to travel there and teach, which he did again in 2012, giving lectures in London and Cornwall. He often says, "Tea is given by Nature to Mankind, not just to the Chinese or any other people."

Sixty Years, Sixty Changes

Last year, Master Lin turned sixty. At that time, he quoted Confucius to me, who at that same age said: “Sixty years, sixty changes (六十歲六十化).” That means we always continue learning, even in our old age. He has retired from teaching now, though he fills a room with Tea spirit and wisdom everywhere he goes. He and Henry often travel to China to visit students, explore tea mountains and share tea with friends there. He has been sourcing tea and teaching Cha Dao for more than thirty years now, and mastering the art of gongfu tea for going on forty. Though he isn’t formally teaching lessons or accepting students as he once was, preferring the modern version of a reclusive life, he still pops into his students’ shops and gives informal teachings. He says that now meeting him for a lesson is up to Destiny. He doesn’t have a phone, so when I asked about how his old students contact him, he replied: “If we meet, we meet. A Tea practice has taught me to live this way. Tea is about slowing down and living simply. The more you understand it, the simpler you long to be.” In fact, when I asked him if he’d like to add any words of wisdom to this article, advice for all of you, he said: “We are living in a fast-moving world, so find an excuse to drink tea. Drinking tea is a short retreat, taking a rest to go for a long journey.”

Master Lin has never married, except to Tea. He loves freedom, and a devotion to Cha Dao. “I love traveling and sharing tea most. That has always been more of a girlfriend to me. I am happy alone, actually. Very happy. I have lived a life of Tea.” He is the continuation of a long line of Tea sages who show up throughout history—out of time and out of place, preserving lost wisdom. And I doubt the future generations, ours included, will ever see one with such an all-inclusive

tea knowledge as Master Lin Ping Xiang.

Master Lin’s honors and accolades would be longer than an article, and not do justice to his profound Tea acumen. In Yunnan, he was heralded as one of ten great “Puerhians”. He has been drinking puerh since the 1980’s, and can regale you with many ‘in those days’ stories about great teas like Song Ping that could be found in bulks of many *tongs* (seven cakes wrapped in bamboo bark). He also has decades of experience aging tea, watching many different kinds of tea change in the long-term, affording him a greater expertise than all of us who’ve yet to see which, if any of our teas transform into jewels, and which to weeds. Though mentioning such honors is a part of a good biographical sketch, and needed for such an article, it doesn’t do justice to the heart of his Tea, his mastery or his love.

Great Man, Great Teacher

Master Lin is a great teacher, kind and patient, but more importantly inspiring you to want to learn more. He’s also full of Tea wisdom, both knowledge and experiential. He’s read and studied so much ancient and modern tea information, traveled to the tea mountains and taught others to brew tea for decades. His students have students who have students, which is why the entire Tea community of Malaysia calls him, “*Ai Ye* (Beloved Grandfather)”. You can always tell a lot about a teacher by his/her students. And let me tell you, the Tea people of Malaysia are amongst the best friends you could have! They are kind, humorous and gentle people, like the Master that has inspired them.

I could write for pages and pages about the qualities in him that I admire. When I look around my life, his influence is everywhere. But there is one last teaching that

I am perhaps most grateful for: *Generosity*. Master Lin’s giving nature is second only to Tea Himself. He shares and gives all day. He shares his being, his knowledge and his tea, and does so completely. He says that some teachers learn something and want to keep it in, but when you really love what you know, you want it to spread. You realize that sharing wisdom makes you happier than having it. Also, you learn a lot about something when you teach it. Master Lin often told me that he learns a lot from his students, which I now understand.

He always has a bag full of the best teas in the world. It is like Happy Buddha’s endless treasure bag—similar to Santa’s—it never ends! I don’t know what kind of beautiful magic flows through that bag he carries, but in all the many years I’ve known him it has never run dry, or even diminished. It’s always full of the same incredibly rare and precious teas, which flow like his heart. He never stops giving to others: around him, great Tea flows like water. To be bright within and gentle without was considered the highest virtue in ancient China. Master Lin is a gentleman of another age and order, and one of the greatest mentors and role models I will ever know.

The generosity that Master Lin has poured into my cup over the years has informed my whole Tea journey. And that giving heart is also the spirit of our center and of this tradition. We have built this place of service and generosity based on his examples of what Tea means. Let the tea flow, constant and without anything asked in return! As such, tea is loving-kindness. For as he so often says, his tea is great because he loves it. And the only true way to love something is to share it. I needn’t look far for my teacher, or the love of Tea he shares. I just put my hand on my chest and hold it there. Then, I open my eyes and pour the pot into the cups of the guests who sit here before me...



六十歲六十化



國際茶亭

VOICES FROM THE HUT

-Steve Kokker & Timo Einpaul

It's always great to hear from all of you. Submitting articles is a great way to connect to your global Tea community. Each of you has a voice, and tea experience worth sharing. As we so often express, the beginner's mind is very wise, and a lot of what we have learned about Tea over the years has come from those experiencing it for the first time in their lives. So if you have something to share, we'd love to hear from you!

Tea Wonder

By Steve Kokker

Some ponderings following a series of deep tea sessions...

With each sip of this tea, I feel a sense of awe building. There is a feeling of power and majesty in me, accompanied by some head stuff, some confusion—how indeed can this be? What is this plant, this spirit? No matter how often this kind of experience has been gifted to me, no matter the myriad times I have been blessed to receive this nectar and share in Her knowledge, to be shaken and stirred so very deeply, I still sometimes ques-

tion this Mystery. What is going on? How can this be explained?

The 'little self' wonders why and wherefore while the higher self bathes in... *wonder*.

Wonder. It's among my favorite words (along with magic; mystery; steam; adrift; sensuous; and fluff). The sense of wonder. It's part of what distinguishes us from our other mammalian cousins. What a marvel it truly is that we can gaze for endless minutes, just for the inherent beauty of it, at a landscape, or at a sunset, or at a small Arctic yellow flower growing tenaciously behind a rock in the tundra, or into the bottomless pools of a dear friend's eyes, or at a touching scene of human interaction, at lovers cuddling on a park bench... These

things arouse in us a sense of awe, amazement and hypnotized wonder (I will use this word often here, be warned).

Wonder is something that many thinkers, philosophers and scientists have written about. It seems to be the inspirational source of our drive to step forward. Astronaut Neil Armstrong once said, and he should know about these things, "Mystery creates wonder, and wonder is the basis of man's desire to understand."

Going back much further, as do most all quotations on just about any subject, Aristotle said, quite famously, that "Philosophy begins with wonder" (actually the quote is also ascribed to his teacher Plato, and to Plato's teacher Socrates—great minds think alike). Less



famously, Aristotle expounded, “Wonder implies the desire to learn”. It is what fuels any quest.

More recently, Alan Watts had this to say about the impossibility of intellectualizing and quantifying one’s innate curiosity about the ways things are: “I don’t know what question to ask when I wonder about the universe. It isn’t a question that I’m wondering about, it’s a feeling that I have... Because I cannot formulate the question that is my wonder. The moment my mouth opens to talk about it, I suddenly find I’m talking nonsense. But that should not prevent wonder from being the foundation of philosophy.”

Wonder and a sense of mystery do seem to be at the root of a desire to learn; in a sense it can be said to

be the motivation to step forward into any endeavor—why we ‘risk’ doing anything at all. It’s a kind of semi-conscious impulse towards a feeling of discovery, as if some part of us yearns for and seeks it. It is fulfilling, and feels fun!

Aristotle, being an empiricist, also knew that knowledge is gained mainly through experience, and that experience for us humans, comes through our senses. None of us really are able to understand something unless we directly experience it ourselves (it’s what makes full understanding between two people a rather distant dream, unless empathy is continually encouraged). We are sensual beings, to a very large degree guided and limited by our physical senses.

Meditative tea drinking is both a sensual and deeply spiritual activity, and as such connects both realms seamlessly. This to me is a wonder, the essential Mystery of Tea. To see a guest’s entire physical frame change over the course of a tea session, to bear witness to a human soul-softening/opening, is to me something so beautiful. On a number of occasions I have been blessed to be able to look into the soulful eyes of someone after a tea session, eyes which just hours before were clouded by thought, confusion, noise, etc. The thanks expressed in this state often come out gorgeously awkward, as previously untapped emotions or states of being are translated into words. This is something Tea,

and we as tea brewers, can offer it to others. How marvelous!

Tea provides a physical bridge to an inner world which most of us have rendered inaccessible by thought patterns, distractions and ego. Many ancient cultures understood that the outer world can be made to nourish and connect with our inner worlds, and they weren't thinking about shopping centers or sports bars... necessarily. For us, tea is one of the bridges to the Sacred, which illuminates some of the mysterious passageways through the soul. And She does this with great love and grace; while Tea is a spirit powerful enough to whack you when needed, usually She just nudges and embraces, protects and reveals. This is the essence of a good teacher, to provide clear vision and to nudge us when it's time to be nudged, yet all along doing so from a basis of care and concern.

Tea & Metta

By Timo Einpaul

I for one, cannot think of an occasion in life where a cup of tea would be ill-suited. This statement might be coming from a tea lover, but if we were to think about it, when was the last time a cup of tea was to anyone's detriment? This may even sound like a silly question to ask, but in all earnestness, when did anyone think: "Oh boy, I wish I hadn't had that cup of tea?" When did Tea ever separate people from one-another or one from one's self? The obvious answer is never. On the contrary, Tea is all-embracing—inclusive rather than exclusive, and it is therefore no wonder that She couples so felicitously with the many activities and practices we are engaged in our daily lives. Tea and yoga? Great! Tea and a friendly chat? Sounds wonderful. Even a hastily prepared mug of tea before heading out to work has its place and charm.

It compliments the activity and our well-being.

However, like all things under the sun, Tea too has its own nature. As a tea lover, I try to do my best to learn about Her. It is often that I sit down and have a quiet bowl or two, musing over its essence. One looks down into the unfurled green leaves and in a sense of wonder and curiosity asks ever so gently: "Who are you? Where are you coming from and what are you heading towards?" Like us all, She too has her own path. As I empty my bowl, I reckon that it seems to be a more quiet, compassionate, inward-leading one. When drinking tea, I find it very natural to gravitate towards thinking about loved ones, having a clearer awareness and compassion towards the people with whom I've crossed paths.

Because of this natural inclination, often when drinking tea, I try to practice loving-kindness meditation as explained in the 5th century Buddhist classic text *Visuddhimagga*, "The Path of Purification". I sit down, boil a kettle of water and put a few leaves in a bowl. As I raise the bowl to my mouth and take a sip, I close my eyes and feel the warmth of the liquid coursing through my body. I repeat to myself mentally: "Like all sentient beings in this universe, I too wish to be happy and free from suffering. May I be free from enmity, affliction and suffering; may I live happily." The exact phrasing does not matter so much; it is, however, important that we understand the meaning of the words as we repeat them and that we set ourselves as an example by which to understand other people. Doing this will create desire for other beings' welfare and happiness, as the Buddha has stated:

*I visited all quarters with my mind
Nor found I any dearer than myself;
Self is likewise to every other dear;
Who loves himself will never harm
another.*

If, over time, enough concentration develops that I am able to remain with the meditation object without coarse effort, I continue on to the second bowl of tea, making sure that I don't rush myself. I serve the second bowl with a teacher that has inspired me deeply on my mind. I say to myself: "May this good man be happy and free from suffering." As the water reaches once again a boil, I fixate on a dearly loved friend. I serve the third bowl. I try to visualize my friend in a context where he expresses the qualities of mind that I revere. The reason for switching meditation objects like this is to create agility in one's mind, to strengthen the concentration and



to broaden the feeling of unattached love and compassion towards various forms of beings.

The fourth bowl is served to a near stranger, a neutral person. This is someone we know, but do not associate with a strong emotion. As an example this might be someone who is working at your local supermarket or a neighbor we see in the hallway on most days. We try to develop the same attitude towards him as we have towards our beloved friend. If we find it difficult and we get distracted, we switch back to our friend and after gaining our ground, try again. As I raise the fifth bowl, I think of a person with whom I have difficult relations. I try to see him

with empathy and deeper understanding to his predicament. This is often the place where resentment arises. If that is the case, I return back to the previous object of meditation and try again after being well-established. Returning to him again, I try to bring out the wholesome qualities in him and concentrate on them.

*This anger that you entertain
Is gnawing at the very roots
Of all the virtues that you guard—
Who is there such a fool as you?*

—Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga

To wrap up, I drink the last bowl centered on each and every one of the previous objects, remaining with each as equanimously as I possibly can. This is one of the many ways that the practice of loving-kindness is described and practiced. It is considered to be a protective meditation, guarding one's mind from irritation and anger, resulting in a strong sense of calm, concentration and peacefulness which also benefits interpersonal relations. Tea offers a beautiful context for this practice, helping us to remain focused and work patiently with our own minds. I hope you will find this practice as beneficial as I have!



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 Lindsey Diacogiannis:

As a child I always loved having tea parties with my dad and sisters. I remember waiting to be old enough to use one of my gran's precious porcelain teacups, and feeling so thrilled when the day finally came. I guess in this way, Tea has always journeyed with me. Growing up in the coffee-saturated Pacific Northwest of America, I can't help but see this as being intentional in my life's path.

It wasn't until three years ago, when I was staying in Vancouver, BC and a friend invited me to go to her favorite tea shop in Chinatown, that my heart really opened up to Tea in a whole new way. We stepped into the shop, and a sense of awe washed over me as my eyes began to take in all the beautiful tea and teaware lining the walls of this narrow shop. Daniel, the shopkeeper, and his wife kindly invited us to sit and enjoy tea with them. I discovered for the first time the magic of the Leaf, as they prepared tea gongfu—the steam rising as water poured over the pot, the small cups waiting to be filled with this enchanting elixir...

Shortly after this visit, my partner at the time, Sam, and I moved to Australia, and began researching Tea and tea ceremonies (admittedly, Sam did most of the research, supported by my curiosity and enthusiasm). We started ordering teaware and experimenting with ceremony on our own, and then eventually came across Global Tea Hut. We both felt like this was 'it'—this was the next step in our adventure with Tea, and so we booked our flights to Taiwan in October 2013. Little did we know how instrumental this trip would be in each of our lives.

It was like coming home. I remember the first tea session we had with Wu De in the large tea room at the center, and tears streaming down my cheeks. My heart filled with a sense of knowing and being known. The last of the Four Virtues of Tea is 'Tranquility', described as a sense of oneness and absence of time. In that moment, nothing else in the world matters, only the experience of 'the Now'. And this is what I experienced in that first session at the Hut. All of my life, travels, experiences and relationships became irrelevant in that moment, and all that I was present to was held in the bowl between my palms. Another beginning...



I visited the Hut again in July 2014, and was blessed to host Wu De and Sam (who has now moved to Taiwan to fully invest in Cha Dao) in February while they were in Melbourne as a part of the Australia/New Zealand tour.

Tea has become a primary part of my life, meeting me each morning in my daily practice, and being shared with friends every Friday evening in Melbourne at a lovely teahouse I was blessed to work at last year, and who now generously hosts us each week (shout out to Impala and Peacock Teahouse!). There's always a bowl here for you, too, should you happen to be Down Under. May a thousand, thousand bowls meet you in your paths....

Love & Light,

Lindsey

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 Museum of Asiatic Arts. You can email her at sabine@letempsdunthe.com.



In Melbourne, Australia, Lindsey hosts Friday night tea sessions at 7/7:30pm. Contact her at lindseylou31@gmail.com.



In Brisbane, Australia, Matty and Lesley host a monthly ceremony on the first Sunday of every month. Contact them at mattychi@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 *new* 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.



Our 2015 Light Meets Life cakes are starting to roll in, beginning with Inner Path. We have some really amazing teas this year. Check the site regularly for details.



We are changing up our video format. We hope to do shorter videos, as opposed to long monthly ones. Let us know what you think.



The center will be closed from April 18 to May 18 for our annual GTH trip and all the work that goes into and follows it!



Submit your feedback and help spread the word about Global Tea Hut!

May Affirmation

I am living towards mastery.

Do I live in a way that leads to my fulfillment? Am I working a practice that leads to self-mastery?

"Tea is the Eastern antidote for Western stress."



www.globalteahut.org