Global Tea Hut

國際茶亭

Tea & Tao Magazine

December 2016

Beneath the Pines

Wild, Old-growth & Aged Liu Bao

Liu Bao Black Tea

Processing, History, Terroir & Lore

Contents

Issue 59 / December 2016

GLOBAL TEA HUT
Tea & Tao Magazine

Beneath the Pines

Liu Bao is a rich and mysterious genre of tea. More and more tea lovers are realizing how fine a cup of Liu Bao is. In what has become a December tradition, we return to the genre, exploring further and deeper than ever. And, of course, we have a very unique and rare Liu Bao to drink together!

Love is changing the world bowl by bowl

Features

Traditions

From the Editor

In December the weather starts to turn cool in Taiwan, which means we begin our hot spring season. Every Friday, from December to February, the whole Center spends the morning at the hot springs, soaking and drinking tea. We usually prefer a shou tea blended with some dian hong. (If you haven't yet tried that, you definitely should. It takes some time to get the amounts and kinds of tea right, but when you find a good match of a certain shou and dian hong, and the right ratios, it is a magical treat on a cold day!) At the Center, the colder weather means we start drinking more shou and aged sheng puerh, as well as black teas (often boiled), like Liu Bao. The winter is always tea-centric for everyone around the world, and it often seems to feel like more people are drinking tea with you.

Of course, December also means the holiday season is upon us, which we know can be stressful for a lot of people. But if you approach this time with the right attitude, it can also be a highlight of the year. As with most things, orientation is everything! Here at the Center, we try to make the holidays an extra-special time of year. We put all our heart into decorating and making or purchasing heartfelt gifts. There is a magic when you allow the gift-giving space and time to honor the gift itself, as well as the one who gave it. We usually make a shou puerh holiday blend to accompany our gift-opening, mixing in ginger, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and some kind of natural sweetener. Then, in the evening, everyone helps prepare a wonderful vegetarian feast and we share our gratitude for the past year. You are all undoubtedly in our hearts at this time of your. My heart swells with gratitude for each and every one of you. May each of you be warm and full of bright tea this holiday season, surrounded by love and loved ones. May your gratitude also swell as you honor your beautiful tea-filled year on this Earth!

This coming year is going to be a big one for Global Tea Hut. We can all feel the trembling currents of a rising wave of energy that will take this experience to the next level. We now have a translation budget, as you can see, so almost every issue will come with translations of Chinese authors from now on. This will add perspective and depth to the content, expanding our tea education to new arenas. We will also release an app in this year that will connect all of you in amazing ways. Finally, we hope that as membership continues to grow, this will be the year where we start the processing of making our Center permanent: purchasing more land and starting the building process. The world needs a free tea center and school, with tons of different tea courses taught by different amazing tea teachers, without any financial motivations involved and devoted to promoting a spirit of tea that is shared freely between those who respect the Earth and each other. And we're going to build it, you and I—together!

This month we return to one of our favorite teas: Liu Bao. This time, we're going to dive deeper into the topic, exploring more of the production, history and lore. Sometimes, people may feel that a magazine like this could run out of topics, being published every month, year after year. But that way of thinking underestimates just how vast the tea world is—lifetimes of travel! What's more, one can dive deeper into the same genre or topic, exploring deeper waters each time (as those of you who have been around in the Hut longer will know.) We hope that this issue will not just be a review of Liu Bao, but rather will start with a review of the genre and then slowly descend into deeper, darker brews than we ever have before, uncovering some aspects of Liu Bao that have never been discussed in English. This is, in fact, one of the more important goals of Global Tea Hut: to offer a deeper, richer and more holistic coverage of tea, from production to history, folklore and science to spirit and ceremony. And to this end, check out the new Expansion Packs we're introducing on pp. 41-2!

Liu Bao is an amazing tea, highlighting some of the best sessions of my entire life. Along with all the wonderful articles exploring new facets of this rich tea, we also have an amazing example to drink together this month—the best Liu Bao we've ever shared. Have an amazing holiday season! We look forward to sharing another wonderful year of Global Tea Hut with you all, and we're so excited for all the improvements to come. Stay tea-tuned.

This month we'd also like to introduce you to our new translator, Emily Foate, who, along with Michelle Huang, has been essential in making these magazines extra rich. Emily and Michelle are tremendous assets, and after exploring many translation options, we can't express how fortunate we all are to have them on board. Raise your bowls to them each month as you read our Chinese articles!

Further Reading

This month, we hope to expand this already in-depth issue to make it an even more comprehensive publication on Liu Bao. We translated many more articles than we could possibly print, so this will be one of the richest Further Readings ever!

Further Readings are all posted on our blog each month.

TEA OF THE MONTH

Once again, we follow our holiday tradition of returning to Liu Bao tea, which is a very underappreciated and absolutely fantastic genre of tea. In fact, it is one of our favorite kinds of tea, and since it is great in the winter and summer (cooling and warming), it brings a bit of summer to our winter (or vice versa if you are in the southern parts of the world). This month's tea is also special because, like last year's, it was donated by our tea brother Henry Yiow, which means it connects all of you to our lineage of gongfu tea. Henry is one of Master Lin's oldest and brightest students. He is generous and kind, and provided this wonderful tea with an open heart. Through it, may you find the sentiment of heritage it expresses from us, and may it be a newfound love at first sip, promising many more amazing cups of Liu Bao in the future!

Before we start discussing Liu Bao, we must once again drive home the difference between red tea and black tea. What is called "black tea" in the West is actually red tea (*hong cha*). Red tea is oxidized completely during production, whereas black tea is characterized by post-production artificial fermentation. Its liquor is actually red. We have covered this to some extent, but it is important to the producers of Liu Bao. This September, we met with two farmers from Liu Bao, in Guangxi, and they were so happy with our efforts to honor and respect true "black tea," returning it to its proper place in the West, that they broke out a celebratory fifty-year-old Liu Bao tea and congratulated us again and again, cup after cup! And their gratitude was definitely sincere, as is our respect for black tea producers.

Liu Bao is a black, black tea produced in Cangwu, Guangxi. The name "Liu Bao" literally translates to "Six Castles," which may refer to forts that existed in the area at some time in the distant past. The local mountains are full of canyons, streams and waterfalls that are misty year-round. The loose, fertile soil, humidity and proper sunshine make the region excellent for growing tea. The tea trees here are neither big- nor small-leaf varietals, which we have discussed extensively in past issues. To briefly summarize: the original tea trees are all what has become known as *Camellia sinensis var. assamica*. They can grow bigger leaves, and generally have a single trunk with roots that grow more downward. As tea moved northward, naturally or carried by people, it evolved into a small-leaf varietal, known as *Camellia sinensis var. sinensis*. These trees can't grow leaves as large, are more bush-like, with many trunks and roots that grow outwards. Liu Bao is a bigger leaf tea, but not as big as puerh. Neither is it as small as small-leaf tea—you could say that Liu Bao is "medium leaf," if you're willing to have a new category; otherwise, it's big leaf. Like puerh, the best-quality Liu Bao tea is made from older tea trees. It is amazing that farmers and indigenous healers demonstrate a deep connection to the fermentation process, adapting their processing and preparation of the leaf accordingly, long before there was even a concept of a microscopic world. They often adapted their processing to suit the microbes before they could have had a notion of such influences, in other words—demonstrating a deeper underlying connection to the Nature of the leaves they shared their lives with.

Liu Bao tea is processed similarly to shou puerh. In fact, when puerh manufacturers were developing the process of artificial fermentation used to create shou puerh in the 1960s and early 70s (officially licensed production began in 1973) they studied Liu Bao production, amongst other kinds of black tea. Ultimately, shou puerh production methodology is based on such teas and owes its existence to them. However, the exchange actually goes the other way as well, since Liu Bao production was also influenced by shou production in the 1980s, resulting in deeper, wetter and longer piling for Liu Bao (as for shou). The main differences in production result from the unique microclimates of both locations, as well as the differences in the varietals. The raw material is very different from shou puerh to Liu Bao (large leaf versus medium leaf) and the microclimate is also very different (Yunnan is wetter and richer in all flora and fauna). This means they need to be piled in very different ways.

Beneath the Pines

Liu Bao, Guangxi, China

c. 2000 Liu Bao Black Tea

Han Chinese

~500 Meters

Check out the Tea of the Month video to learn more!

www.globalteahut.org/videos

Processing

There are some variations in Liu Bao production, as is the case with all tea, so formulas can be a bit misleading, as they ignore the adaptations farmers make to suit the weather—different amounts of rainfall lead to different schedules and moisture content in the leaves, for example. Also, different factories/farmers have different recipes, even internally, at different times or for variety.

Liu Bao was traditionally harvested in bud-sets of one bud and two leaves, though in modern times more leaves are sometimes picked to increase yield—a problematic trend in many tea-growing areas. There have been four general processing methods of Liu Bao tea throughout history. Though some scholars debate the dates and some of the details, we will present them as Master Lin taught us.

Lao Cha Po (Grandma Tea)

Since very ancient times, people in Guangxi have made very simple tea to drink. Long before tea looked like it does today, the villagers would cook the leaves in a wok with a tiny bit of water and then hang them up to dry from the rafters above their oven in the kitchen. The pinewood fires they cooked with would give the tea a smokey flavor. They would then boil this tea or serve it in bowls. Such tea is rare, but can still be found in some houses even today.

Antique Era Liu Bao

In the early days, before 1958, Liu Bao tea was steamed three times—once for de-enzyming (*sa qing*), then for piling and finally for compression. At that time, they didn't wither (oxidize) the tea. It was picked and directly sent to the "kill green (*sa qing*)" stage, which arrests oxidation and de-enzymes the tea, making it less bitter. In those days, the *sa qing* was done by steaming the tea as opposed to wok-firing like most teas. Then it was left overnight to be finished the next day. Master Lin thinks that leaving the tea overnight is maybe how farmers discovered piling, and the improvement it makes on this kind of tea. The next day, they would roll the tea and steam it once more for piling. In some cases, cultures from previous batches were introduced to promote fermentation. It was then dried in big bamboo baskets over pinewood fires, which is one of the defining characteristics of Liu Bao processing in all eras. After that, the tea was once again steamed in order to compress it into the large baskets, as we will discuss in a bit.

Vintage Liu Bao

After 1958, the farmers stopped using steam to de-enzyme the tea (*sa qing*) and started firing it in woks like other tea. Like puerh, Liu Bao is given a lower-temperature and shorter-duration de-enzyming so that the heat-resistant spores can survive into the fermentation phase. They also stopped using steam to pile/ferment the tea. Instead, they began spraying the tea with water and piling it, in the way that shou puerh is fermented. Consequently, Liu Bao went from being processed with three stages of steaming to having just one: the final steam for compression. In the vintage era, Liu Bao was: picked, fired/de-enzymed, left overnight, rolled, sprayed and piled, dried over pinewood fire, steamed and compressed. (Sometimes there were two pilings, a "cold" and "hot" one, which will be discussed later in the issue.)

A Beginner's Mind in Tea

At the Center, we practice avoiding the use of the word "repeat." Sometimes, it is helpful to adjust the way one uses language, as it then helps affirm or change habit patterns, but only if we don't get caught up in the semantics and focus instead on the spirit of what we are trying to cultivate. In this instance, not using the word "repeat" is about maintaining the "beginner's mind" of Zen, which is a translation of the Sanskrit word for wisdom (prajna). Tea also is a path of studentship. In Zen (and Cha Dao—they are "one flavor," after all), we say that only the dead and gone can be called "masters." As long as we live, we are students of Zen (and tea). In Cha Dao, we practice passivity, humbleness, open-mindedness and a genuine desire to learn. Every time we go to places rich in tea wisdom, like Wuyi in Fujian, for example, we are left with the feeling that what we don't know is infinitely more than what we do—even after decades. And we wouldn't be able to learn so much each time if we approached the place, or the teachers there with an attitude of "knowing." If you cultivate this attitude, you will go far in tea, which is, ultimately, a path of receiving, of humility and acceptance—a path of honoring even the simplest of lessons.

In fact, we learn through repetition. Advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered. We can always refine our understanding of tea, tea brewing, spirit or cultivation. Repeating information helps us to understand and remember. We all use it as a technique in our studies. In these issues, we are committed to "renewing" rather than "repeating." When we do reprint information, we always update, change and grow the material to add depth and detail so that you can review the basic material and also travel a bit deeper each time, growing along with us—in understanding and tea wisdom both!

In this issue, we will delve deeply into the history of Liu Bao from many perspectives, and hopefully by revolving around the same topics from different angles we'll all evolve our understanding of Liu Bao tea!

茶 The trees are between the large-leaf varietals of Yunnan and small-leaf varietals of northern tea regions.

Aged to Modern Liu Bao

In the 1980s there was another slight shift in Liu Bao production that was influenced by the prominence of shou puerh: the piling process was extended longer and the piles themselves formed deeper to increase fermentation. This often gives the Liu Bao from this era a camphor flavor, as well as a wetter profile.

In the last ten to fifteen years, factories have also started producing green, sheng Liu Bao to rival sheng puerh. This tea is often harsh and strange, and it is difficult to know how it will age, if at all.

After fermentation (piling) and sorting, the leaves are steamed to re-moisten them and then pressed into large bamboo baskets. The tea is packed down into these wicker baskets, pressed in tightly around the edges and more loosely in the middle, to facilitate the next phase of air-drying. The drying takes a few months, after which the tea is often aged.

In previous times, Liu Bao was only sold in large baskets weighing 40 to 50 kilograms. These large bundles were sometimes wrapped in huge bags for transportation, called "gunnies (*Bao Lan* 宝篮)" by Malaysian Chinese who spoke fluent English. In more recent times, Liu Bao has often been re-packaged after aging into smaller amounts. Modern Liu Bao is also produced in one-kilogram baskets, into other amounts in boxes, bags, or even compressed into other shapes to hitch a ride on the bandwagon of puerh, as its neighbor has soared to great popularity and wealth.

When Liu Bao wasn't as famous, the baskets were aged for one to three years before even being sent to market. After the Great War, they were first put in air raid tunnels that are common in the area. These cool and moist wind tunnels were perfect for aging/fermenting the tea. After some period in the tunnels, the tea was then transported to wooden storage warehouses that had wet and dry rooms. They would be alternated between a drier space right after coming out of the moist tunnels and then to a wetter room. Drier spaces were often higher up, since humidity can differ a lot between the floor and the ceiling. This oscillation from wet to dry would continue until the masters felt the tea was fermented enough.

As we mentioned above, a lot of Liu Bao made these days is green and raw/sheng, so it doesn't have as much piling or aging in the tunnels/warehouses. And even the tea that is aged is only done so for a very short time compared to the years of warehousing that was done in the past eras. Our Tea of the Month has been aged for about sixteen years, though. (It did go through piling, but it was dry, wihout any water sprayed on to the pile to help speed up fermentation.)

Vintages of Liu Bao

Traditionally, Liu Bao tea was exported to Cantonese tea drinkers in Malaysia and Hong Kong. In Malaysia, it was often served to tin/pewter miners during their breaks. In mainstream Chinese culture in Malaysia, senior citizens refer to it simply as "big leaf (*da ye*)." It always had a reputation for being cheaper tea, often boiled, dried and re-boiled in restaurants. A lot of famous old Liu Bao teas have survived in Malaysia. Some of the most famous, most coveted vintages of Liu Bao tea are:

茶 1950s "Joy to the World," *Pu Tian Gong Qing* (普天共庆), which was a higher grade of Liu Bao reserved for the managers and owners of the mines.

茶 1970s *Shuang Xing Hao Yin* (双星号印 / SSHC Penang).

茶 Liu Bao in gunnies, like N152, LLLL367, NL229, etc.

茶 Some of the best/most famous vintages of Liu Bao teas are those produced by the Guangxi Wuzhou Tea Factory (广西梧州茶厂). They produced the famous "VIVE" in the 1980s (with two grades) and a famous 1990s Liu Bao as well.

Master Lin ranks the five best Liu Bao teas in this order: 1930s *Pu Tian Gong Qing*, 1950s *Zhong Cha*, 1960s LLLL367 (which came from Hong Kong and has four "L's" as grades from one to four. The "L" represents "orchid"—"*lan*" in Chinese—because this tea is Orchid brand, and "four orchids" was their highest grade), 1950s *Da Xing Hang* and finally 1950s *Fu Hua*.

It used to be that Liu Bao was a cheap alternative to aged puerh, often providing the same warming, deep and fragrant brews that settle the soul and aid in digestion. However, nowadays the more famous vintages of Liu Bao are also expensive. Aged Liu Bao is said to offer a dark red cup with mellow, thick liquor that tastes of betel nut. It is often regarded as the highest quality when covered with the spores of a certain yellow mold, which you will read about later on in this issue. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is cooling or warming when needed, which is very unique, and also refreshing and good for dispelling dampness as well as detoxification.

Molds & Microbes

Some of the magic of post-production fermentation isn't in the tea leaves. Scientifically, little is known about many of the molds and bacteria that arise naturally in fermented teas like puerh, Liu Bao and other black teas. Most of these teas grow in humid areas, so molds, fungi and unique bacteria are present in and around the trees. As the tea is fermented, each cake, brick or batch of loose tea will be different. Even sheng puerh, aged naturally over time, is susceptible to mold and not all of it is bad for us.

When it comes to black tea, Chinese people have always determined the quality of many teas by how many "Golden Glowers (*Jin Hua*)" they have. This is especially true of the brick teas of Hunan, where such mold is most desirable. In fact, Hunanese brick tea is intentionally fermented in conditions favorable to this mold, and any brick without it is considered lower quality. Traditionally, Liu Bao tea was not characterized in this way, though it is sometimes found with this mold on it. For some reason, this particular mold very rarely grows on puerh (aged sheng or shou), though puerh has many other kinds of molds and fungi.

Also known as *Eurotium cristatum*, most of the golden bunches are actually spores. In recent times, black tea has started to grow in popularity and some Liu Bao and Liu An teas are also fermented under conditions that promote Golden Flowers.

There have been medical studies in China suggesting that *Eurotium cristatum* can be effective in treating diabetes, promoting a faster metabolism

松木乾燥

Pine Drying

The distinguishing characteristic of Liu Bao processing is the pine drying. Since pinewood was traditionally used to dry Liu Bao tea, as opposed to charcoal, as for oolong, or the sun, as for puerh, it often tastes of pine smoke. This one of the characteristics that helps distinguish it from other black teas and aged sheng or young/old shou puerh. The pinewood is burned for some time (essentially to coals) and then tea is placed over the heat to dry. However, no matter how much the fire has died down, there will always be some smoke, since pine is such a resinous wood. This means that there is also an odor, rich and strong or soft and mild, depending on how skillfully the fire was applied and then controlled to dry the tea. (A softer, milder heat is ideal.)

Nowadays, other methods are used to dry Liu Bao, including electric machinery that works like an oven. There are still some producers making Liu Bao in traditional ways, but usually only when they are commissioned to do so. Try to see if you can taste the pine-smoky flavors in this month's tea and any other Liu Bao you come across. This will be helpful in identifying aged Liu Bao amongst other fermented teas.

Last September, when we were in Malaysia visiting Master Lin, an old friend named Alex came by with some very old tea his father had left him. He wasn't sure if it was aged puerh or Liu Bao, and therefore wanted to brew some for Master Lin so he could tell him. We drank that tea and determined that it was, in fact, puerh because it lacked the pinewood flavors of a Liu Bao. Master Lin then rooted around in his bag and pulled out a very old Liu Bao. Brewed side-by-side, the pinewood flavors and aromas were very distinct from the puerh. The puerh liqour was also thicker, with a consistency like milk. It was amazing to be able to taste the pine smoke even after so many decades in storage, suggesting that maybe farmers used to smoke it even more than they do these days.

and as a digestive aid, and even potentially assisting in the treatment of cancer patients. Though Golden Flowers have been used medicinally in China, Mongolia and Tibet for centuries—where most brick black tea was exported to—further research is still needed.

Beyond the more scientific approach to health, we would also like to offer a different approach that focuses on trusting our bodies, Nature and life, looking to our own connection to our selves and plant medicines instead of waiting for a lab report to tell us what is going on inside of us. Perhaps the combination of these approaches results in more holistic health and healing.

There is some debate about the molds that develop in fermented teas like puerh and black tea. There aren't any known cases of mycotoxins in these teas, but the possibility is there. Some white spores on puerh tea will give it a musty flavor, which people may or may not appreciate. Traditionally, almost all aged puerh was musty, having been stored in Southeast Asia. The tea wasn't as valuable as it is today, and was often left to age naturally, with little human intervention. As puerh has increased in value, however, tea lovers are more concerned with how their tea will age, putting more effort into controlling the storage environment. In the future, we will be able to share more experiments and results as tea is aged in new environments around the world, some conducive to better aging and some not so nice.

Although many people think of mold as bad for us, it isn't inherently so. Our bodies are full of microorganisms. We need them to survive. There are bacteria all around and throughout our bodies, and by number they account for the majority of cells in us. While we find that the presence of certain white and yellow molds on aged sheng and other black teas enhances their Qi, and in the case of Golden Flowers makes them sweeter, we aren't doctors and wouldn't recommend using this tea to treat any illness. You need to take responsibility for your own health, consulting physicians, Western or Chinese.

Putting aside disclaimers about how we won't be responsible for your health, we drink such tea a lot and it is great. As we mentioned above, there are no known cases of mycotoxins released from Golden Flowers—to the contrary, there are several studies, both Western and Chinese promoting their medicinal benefits. Also, there is research which demonstrates that the molds and bacteria in most teas are mitigated by the temperature of water used in tea preparation, especially dark teas like Liu Bao and puerh, which are better when prepared with water that has reached a full boil. (The hotter water helps penetrate the tough, fermented leaves.)

There is a magic in the relationship between the millions of microorganisms in fermented teas and our bodies. This is a big part of what makes puerh and aged teas, like this month's Liu Bao, special. We have talked here a lot about the scientific aspects of these molds, but we should also recognize that it is hard to say how much of the Qi in any aged tea is from the leaves and how much from the microorganisms. Without humidity, puerh and black teas don't ferment. The changes they go through over time are related to the presence of bacteria, itself the defining characteristic of fermentation—in anything from cheese and yogurt to kombucha.

The mold adds a deepening to the Qi, making it more Yin, while sweetening the tea, bringing a longer-lasting *huigan*. Microorganisms—molds and bacteria—are part of what makes tea and the world alive.

We have Liu Bao teas from all different ages, some of which are fifty or sixty years old, some from the 1980s, 90s and early 00s. Very few of them have Golden Flowers, so count yourself lucky if you find one! This month's tea has little to no Golden Flowers, as Malaysia is not really humid enough to encourage them. Still, learning about them is a part of understanding black teas like Liu Bao.

Tea of the Month

Beneath the Pines was donated by Henry on our trip to Malaysia this year. He said that we could travel deeper and further this year, sharing a better Liu Bao than our last one (Old Grove), which was one of the most talked about and beloved Global Tea Hut teas of 2015. So you're in for a treat! Both teas were commissioned by Henry himself and processed traditionally, in much the same way as Liu Bao was made back in the day, with a lighter, more shallow piling like the tea made between 1958 and the 1980s. This one comes from the Wuzhou factory.

There are, however, a couple of reasons that Beneath the Pines is a better tea than Old Grove. First of all, this tea is older by maybe ten years. Old Grove was from 2008. We aren't sure exactly when this year's tea was produced, but it comes from some time around the turn of the millennium—give or take a year. The added age has increased the depth, vibrancy and wisdom this tea has to offer. The second reason this tea is a step up from last year is that it was produced using better raw material, from older, wild trees, which was more available at that earlier time and for a better price. And Old Grove was already one of the best modern-era Liu Bao teas we have ever tried (let's not push it down too hard, after all, especially when so many of us had such amazing sessions with that beautiful tea!) Highlighting these improvements is meant to help us grow and learn together—about quality tea in different genres and also about why a particular tea is finer.

This month's tea is also different from other Liu Bao in some other ways that are worth discussing. Since Beneath the Pines was piled/fermented for a shorter time, it is more raw (*sheng*) than most Liu Bao teas. This may have happened because of the large, wild leaves and/or because of the rising popularity of puerh at the time. It was also fermented without spraying water on the piles (dry piling). This means that Beneath the Pines is more lightly fermented than most Liu Bao teas and therefore has more room to grow over time. Much of the Liu Bao from the early days was also artificially fermented to a lesser degree since it also went through years of natural fermentation before it was even sold. Also, Beneath the Pines was not compressed like most Liu Bao; the baskets were just filled with the leaves and passed on that way. This probably also had to do with the size/kind of leaves. These two factors make Beneath the Pines more mild, soft, feminine and graceful than almost all Liu Bao teas we have ever tried. Ordinarily, these greener Liu Bao teas that broke with the tradition of heavier piling were made because it was cheaper (or to be like puerh), and are therefore not usually nice. This month's tea is an exception. We wanted to send a tea that represented modern trends while still being great to drink!

Beneath the Pines is named after Wu De's favorite Chinese poem, and captures the essence of that poem wonderfully. It tastes of a pine forest, and has a wandering uplifting Qi that makes you feel as though you are lost in such a place, with only the wind and the pine-fragrance to guide you. This month's tea is soft and graceful, like a very pleasant autumn or early winter forest walk. It is a wonderful tea for the holiday season, as it refreshes and inspires, while remaining warm-hearted and friendly. And during the potential stresses of the holiday season, we could all use some of that energy! May we all stay grounded in the spirit of love, light and connection that informs the holidays, helping to be a supporting force of positivity amongst our colleagues, loved ones and even those whose paths we cross more gently each day. This tea can really help make this a better holiday season. Just breathe deeply and remember what it was like standing Beneath the Pines!

Seaching for the Hermit in Vain

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

Chia Tao (777-841 C. E.)
Translated by Lin Yutang

尋隱者不遇

松下問童子
言師採藥去
只在此山中
雲深不知處

一賈島

Beneath the Pines

Like so many of you, we also sit down with friends to share the Tea of the Month. And though we drank Beneath the Pines at a different time than you, we are reminded once again of the interconnectedness we share within this global tea community. Just as we set out altar cups in acknowledgment of our tea brothers and sisters the world over, we also drank this tea with all of you in mind, knowing that somewhere under this global thatched roof, you'll likely be doing the same! And just as you might discuss your experiences drinking this tea with your friends, we did the same:

茶 We meet Beneath the Pines, Your Heart in My Heart. Together we listen to the wind rustling through trees, the freshly fallen leaves dancing upon a soft, wet earth. We enter into the stillness of sunlight, clarity shining its warm rays upon us. Long after the last bowl is dried, the forest continues to sing!

– Abby Parker, USA

茶 When I first smelled the dry leaves of "underneath the pine" I thought about wood. The smell stayed so present that it transported me into a warm autumn day in the forest throughout the whole session. The red-brown color reminded me of fallen leaves in the wind, the trees gently and slowly preparing for winter. The tea connected with my heart and made my chest do a slow joyful dance, swinging with the leaves. This feeling of lightness was supported with every sip, leaving a very soft bitterness and warmth in my mouth.

– Sophie Taenzer, Germany

茶 The raw smell of soil in the dry leaves instantly took me to the dynamic ecosystems of the forest and introduced me to the life crawling amongst the roots of the trees. Upon drinking, she was soft and stable. Cup after cup, the heat from the velvety honey-hued liquid lingered around my temples before steadily sinking to my abdomen, a balanced Qi throughout. The consistent smooth wash over my mouth and tongue and strong *hui tian* revealed a steady body and structure, with a lingering light breeze that could be sensed between the leaves.

– Resham Daswani, Hong Kong

茶 Crisp, fresh, awake, clear, like the moments before the sun creeps through the tree tops, finding its way through the fog to the soil... Opening the heart and caressing the lungs. A gentle silky sweetness with each cup. This tea brings clarity to the mind and softness to the heart.

– Laura Chandler, Australia

茶 Sheltered under the pines, the wind swirls around me. As I breathe the fragrance in, my mind quiets to sense the deeper truths in the tea. The aroma moves up into my forehead. I felt a sense of calm move from the physical to the subtle body.

– Sam Gibb, Taiwan/New Zealand

Check out the video on brewing tips now!

www.globalteahut.org/videos

Brewing Tips

Like shou puerh or aged puerh, aged Liu Bao is often better when it is a bit darker. Try adding a bit more leaf than you are used to, or steep the tea a bit longer. You want the liquor to be dark red or even black (like the name of the genre). When the steam swirls around the dark liquor, with shades that fade from black to browns, and then into maroons and reds with a gold ring around the edge, you will know you have got the perfect cup of aged tea.

Heat will be very important when brewing dark, aged black tea like this month's. Not only will you want hotter water, but the source will be very important. Try to seek out the best quality heat and kettle combination you can for this tea. If you have multiple options, definitely choose whatever is the best. (If you don't have a choice of heat source and/or kettle, then be content with what you do have.) We will post some of the information concerning heat and kettles in the Further Readings section for this issue.

If you do "preserve the heat" with a tea like this, you will find it brews up much richer, darker and more full-bodied. It will also be more patient (耐泡), which means you'll get more steepings. As we spoke about in the Gongfu Tea Tips last month, keeping the tea patient and fluent from cup to cup makes a huge difference in a session, especially when brewing gongfu. With a tea like this, proper brewing will have more to do with heat than any other practical consideration. If you focus on cultivating and maintaining a high and consistent temperature, you will find that you get way more enjoyment out of this month's tea. There's really no better brewing advice for this month than that!

Liu Bao Tea

Six Castles of Bliss

六座城堡福氣

六堡黑茶

茶人: ***Wu Ping***

Honorary Deputy President of the Wuzhou City Liu Bao Tea Association

What defines Liu Bao tea? This is something that not many people can articulate; even those who are well-versed in Cha Dao often know little more than some basic facts: that it's a member of the black tea family with a rich history and that it takes its name from its place of origin: Liu Bao village, in Cangwu County, Wuzhou City, in China's Guangxi Province. As for the precise characteristics of Liu Bao tea, up until the last decade or so, nobody had been clear about these for a very long time. This led to a situation where the name "Liu Bao" was used indiscriminately to refer to any black tea produced in the area surrounding Wuzhou. To remedy this, the Guangxi Inspection and Quarantine Bureau released an official standard entitled Liu Bao Tea. This publication details the characteristics of Liu Bao, including its distinctive aroma and traditional production method, and discusses the significance and scope of this unique variety of tea.

Liu Bao tea (六堡茶) is a classic example of Chinese black tea, or *heicha* (黑茶). (In Chinese, "black" tea refers to a category of dark, fermented teas similar to puerh, and distinct from red tea. What is usually called "black" tea in English is actually red tea.) It's named after the place where it was traditionally produced, Liu Bao, or "Six Castles," Village in Cangwu. During the planned economy period, the definition of Liu Bao tea widened to include any black tea produced using the traditional Wuzhou method in the surrounding areas of Guangxi, including Heng County, Lin'gui County, and cities such as Guilin, Hezhou, and Cenxi. Production was concentrated around three major factories in Wuzhou, Guilin, and Heng County. Altogether, the Wuzhou area produces a little over 1200 tons of Liu Bao tea each year. Of these, over 800 tons are exported annually to nearby regions and countries such as Hong Kong, Macau, Southeast Asia, and Japan. The remainder is sold domestically, with the major markets located in the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi.

For many years, there was no unified standard for the export of Liu Bao tea. Trade agreements relied largely on the mutual approval of the two parties regarding the standard of the tea, rather than any accurate or scientific criteria. There wasn't any kind of governing body or officially recognized standard to regulate manufacturing, which made it difficult to expand the Liu Bao market. So it became necessary to establish a unified standard in order to promote a flourishing export market, regulate the examination and quality control of Liu Bao, and protect the legal rights of all parties involved in the export industry.

The Official Definition of Liu Bao Tea

The Guangxi Inspection and Quarantine Bureau released the official export standard for Liu Bao tea on April 8, 2003, and implemented it on October 8 of the same year. It was the first industry standard for Liu Bao tea and had the support of fifteen relevant companies and organizations, including the Technical Supervision Department, the Guangxi Tea Import and Export Corporation, the Guangxi Local Products Corporation, and the two major enterprises who had been steadily producing Liu Bao tea at the time. The official *Liu Bao Tea* standard contains a precise definition: Liu Bao tea (traditionally also called Liu Pao in English) is made from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis (L.) O. Kuntze* tea plant. It's made using the tender leaves and stems of new shoots and is manufactured according to the traditional Liu Bao tea-making method. This is divided into two parts: the first is the early processing, which includes "kill-green" (firing in a wok to halt oxidization), rolling, heaping, or *wodui* (渥堆), rolling again, then drying. The second part of the process is refining the tea, which involves sifting, blowing, selecting, grading, initial steaming while heaped, a second steaming whilst pressing into shape, and finally, maturing. This delicate and complex process results in the unique black tea that is Liu Bao.

Although the official *Liu Bao Tea* standard doesn't go into the manufacturing process in much detail, a more in-depth introduction to the various steps in the process can be found in related publications such as the Guangxi Local Products Corporation's *The Processing and Inspection of Tea Leaves*, which includes a thorough introduction.

In addition, two researchers from the Wuzhou Tea Factory in Guangxi—technician Yang Jinquan (楊錦泉) and former factory deputy head Liao Qingmei (廖慶梅)—have carried out in-depth quantitative studies into each step in the Liu Bao tea production process, based on practical experimentation. This has allowed them to make some recommendations as to how best to control and evaluate the production process; their findings represent the most complete, scientific, and practical research to date on the traditional Liu Bao tea production method.

The "Liu Bao Fragrance"

Liu Bao tea is known for its distinctive aroma, reminiscent of the betel, or areca, nut. The official *Liu Bao Tea* standard contains the following description of this famed Liu Bao fragrance: "Liu Bao *maocha* (毛茶, unprocessed tea leaves) should possess these qualities: the fragrance should be mellow, rich, and refreshing; the flavor rich, strong and refreshing. Refined, fully processed Liu Bao tea should have the following qualities: the fragrance should be pure, mellow, and rich, with the scent of betel nut; the taste should be strong and full-bodied with a betel nut flavor and a sweet aftertaste." (There will be a more detailed discussion of this distinctive fragrance in the Further Readings on our blog.)

The Unique Characteristics of Liu Bao Tea

In addition to the requirements for fragrance and flavor, the *Liu Bao Tea* standard also outlines the following qualities: Liu Bao *maocha* liquor should be a clear reddish-yellow; the brewed leaves should be tender with an even yellow-brown color. The unbrewed leaves are straight, even, tightly twisted and of uniform size. They are light brown and lustrous in appearance, and are categorized as "clean," meaning that no extraneous matter (such as tea twigs or other ingredients) are present in the tea leaves. Refined Liu Bao tea should have clear, deep red liquor, and the brewed tea leaves should be reddish-brown. Before brewing the leaves are straight and even like the *maocha,* but with a dark, blackish-brown glossy appearance, and are also "clean." In addition to this, the Liu Bao tea produced in Wuzhou is aged in caves for a long time, and develops a mottled yellow color known as "Golden Flowers," or *Jin Hua* (金花).

The "Golden Flowers" that develop on Liu Bao tea leaves become more prominent with maturation—experts have identified them as *Eurotium cristatum*, a type of beneficial fungus. As the *Eurotium cristatum* grows, it metabolizes certain chemicals from the tea leaves and produces various extracellular enzymes including polyphenol oxidase, pectase, cellulase, and proteases. The chemical changes catalyzed in the tea include oxidization, polymerization, degradation, and isomerization; for example, the starch in the tea leaves is transformed into monosaccharides, and polyphenol-type chemical compounds are oxidized. These chemical transformations alter the color, scent, and flavor of the tea. The color of the tea liquor becomes a reddish-brown, the "raw" scent is eliminated, and the aroma and flavor are enhanced; all of these elements come together to create Liu Bao tea's distinctive style and flavor. Over the long history of Liu Bao tea drinking, the presence of "Golden Flowers" has become a well-established marker of superior quality tea.

Liu Bao tea is often summarized using four words: "red, rich, aged, and mellow." The best Liu Bao teas are recognized by their distinct betel nut taste and aroma, and the presence of "Golden Flowers" on the tea leaves.

The Results of the Liu Bao Tea Standard

In 2002, prior to the release of the *Liu Bao Tea* standard, there were only two factories producing Liu Bao—the Wuzhou Tea Factory and the Wuzhou Tea Import and Export Corporation Tea Processing Plant. The tea they produced was mostly for export. With the support and cooperation of these two enterprises, the Guangxi Inspection and Quarantine Bureau compiled the *Liu Bao Tea* standard based on the existing practices of the two factories, and released it the following year (2003). This standard outlined the technical specifications for the production of Liu Bao tea, and marked the start of an era of standardized production. It represented a milestone in the development of Liu Bao tea, signifying that the art of Liu Bao production had reached a mature and stable state, and that Liu Bao tea had become a product with a rich sense of *terroir*. These two factories have now been manufacturing and exporting Liu Bao tea for several decades; they have been instrumental in developing and passing down the history, craft, and culture behind Liu Bao tea.

This new era of standardized production brought about a significant increase in the quality of Liu Bao tea and guaranteed a uniformly high standard, which earned it the recognition of both local and international consumers. This helped the industry to gradually emerge from a difficult period and really begin to flourish. The implementation of the official *Liu Bao Tea* standard has had tangible benefits for all involved in the industry, including tea factory owners, tea merchants, supervisory bodies, and, of course, tea drinkers.

茶 *Modern Liu Bao.*

六堡起源

Origins of Liu Bao

茶人: ***Donated by Guangxi Publishing House***

When exploring any topic, especially with the passion of a true tea lover, there can be a polarization of educational methodology into either focusing completely on the "factual," or over-romantcizing the mytho-poetic. In the Hut, we've always favored a holistic approach to tea, learning about all aspects of production and science along with spirit and poetry. It really does seem like one misses out on so much of what tea has to offer without both. In this issue, we're going to thoroughly explore the Heavenly and Earthly castles!

Liu Bao tea is famed for its rich history. We know from historical tea records that it was already being produced in the Tang Dynasty, and was known far and wide by the Ming and Qing. During the Qing Dynasty, the Empress Dowager is said to have drunk Liu Bao tea throughout her life for beautification and weight loss, and as a general tonic for good health. Liu Bao tea was also presented as a precious gift to foreign envoys and bestowed upon chancellors as a reward for good deeds and loyal service. This gave rise to a fashion for drinking Liu Bao among the high-ranking officials in the Qing imperial household.

In the more recent past, Liu Bao was the most commonly exported variety of tea and was held in great esteem by overseas Chinese. Over the last hundred years it has earned a place in the everyday lives of people in Malaysia, where it is regarded as an essential health product. But where exactly did Liu Bao tea originate? When was it first planted and harvested? Although the reading of historical texts may not yet have brought us definitive answers to these questions, there are certainly some interesting answers to be found by talking to the local tea farmers. According to local oral history, Liu Bao tea has been grown since ancient times: the legends of Liu Bao have been passed down through many generations.

The Origin of Liu Bao Tea

Of all the tea-growing mountains in the Liu Bao Village district, the tea leaves from Tangping Village's Black Stone Mountain (黑石山) are the most famous. Liu Bao is inhabited by people of the Yao ethnic group and the majority Han ethnicity, who live together peacefully. Since it's such a remote and inaccessible place, traditional customs have been preserved since ancient times; it's an idyllic, almost utopian little mountain village. Even today, the local tea growers continue to pass down knowledge and customs through the generations. Some of the oldest known Liu Bao tea trees grow on Black Stone Mountain, which is named after two large black stones that sit atop the mountain. According to local folklore, there are two ancient trees growing on that mountain that are the original ancestors of all the Liu Bao tea plants alive today.

It is said that a very long time ago, the Jade Emperor wanted to better understand the customs of the human world. So, he ordered Xi Wangmu, the Queen Mother of the West, to descend to the mortal realm accompanied by an entourage of fairies in order to conduct an investigation. On her way down to earth, the Queen Mother of the West happened upon Black Stone Village, and, as she was thirsty, took a sip from a clear spring that flowed there. The water tasted so wonderful, so sweet and refreshing, that it instantly washed away all her weariness from the long journey. She was so delighted that she decided to do a good deed for the villagers and build a small dam, so that people could easily quench their thirst with the clear, sweet water.

So, she ordered her fairies to work through the night to move the many-colored stones in order to build the dam. As they worked, the colorful stones radiated their brilliant light all around the sky, and the whole area around Tangping was lit up as bright as day. It was so bright that it woke one of the peasant women from the village, who, thinking that the day had already begun—and an unusually bright day it was, too—got up to dry some clothes and began to beat her dustpan. *Clang, clang, clang!* The sound of the dustpan echoed through the rolling hills and into the forest and mountains nearby.

Before the rise of Kuan-yin, Xi Wangmu, the Queen Mother of the West, was the most important goddess in Chinese culture. The first time she is mentioned dates back to the dawn of history, in the fifteenth century B.C.E. (Shang Dynasty, 1766–1122 B.C.E.), on oracular bones that were used in divination ceremonies. She has long ties with Daoism, and is even mentioned in the works of Zhuangzi. She is always depicted as a royal, courtly and noble woman, as in this painting of her with her attendant. She is believed to bestow longevity, health and even immortality onto the loyal.

The fairies, hearing the sound and thinking the dawn was upon them, hurriedly abandoned their work and vanished back to the heavens. The many-colored stones, abandoned in mid-air, fell down to earth and landed beside the village. So, the villagers didn't get their dam, but beside the stream there now stood a beautiful, multi-colored cliff.

When the Queen Mother of the West saw that her good deed had not come to fruition, she ordered the fairies to place two magical tea seeds into the cracks of the many-colored cliff, and set a fairy dog to guard them. Many years passed, until finally the immortal tea plants began to grow. After so many seasons of lashing rain and beating sun, the cliffs were no longer rainbow-colored, but had turned completely black. Having finally accomplished his duty, the faithful little fairy dog left an image of himself in stone on the cliff-top; then he, too, bid the mortal world farewell and returned to the heavens.

The two magical trees grew lush and green, and every year the villagers would scale the cliff to harvest the tea so they could brew it for their visitors. The visitors had never tasted such pure, rich, and mellow tea, and smacked their lips in praise. When the villagers drank the tea after a hard day in the fields, their thirst was instantly quenched and their throats soothed. Whenever they went up the mountain to chop firewood or harvest mushrooms, they would always bring a big gourd full of the wonderful tea. The people of Black Stone Village have never forgotten that black stone cliff and those two fairy trees: this delightful folktale has been handed down through the generations and is still told today.

The Story of Liu Bao Tea Baskets

A very long time ago, so the story goes, lived a young man and a young woman who were very much in love. When they met, they would sing beautiful duets together—that was how young people courted, in those days. They wanted to get married, and the young man was busy worrying over how to pay a suitable bridewealth to her family, as was the custom, when he suddenly received a letter from his beloved. In it was written a song: "Do not worry, elder brother dear; your little sister's family for riches does not care. With a true heart you must come to fetch me, and bring a small basket filled with ten *jin* of tea." (It was quite usual for all young people to call each other "brother" and "sister" as terms of affection.) When the young lad read the letter he was at once both overjoyed and anxious. The joyous part was that the family of his wife-to-be didn't require money or expensive gifts; but the worrying part was this: ten *jin* of dry tea leaves was enough to fill a very, very large basket—how was he supposed to carry it in a "small basket" to his beloved's home? He thought hard for three days and three nights, but he was still stumped.

After all this time, the thoughtful young girl guessed her sweetheart's worries, so she cleared her throat and sang out to him: "Your future wife will give you a test; a clever wife always knows best! I cannot get married without the tea; dear brother needs some help from me!" The clever girl told him to boil a half-full pan of water and place a bamboo steamer on top, then to press the Liu Bao tea leaves into the steamer as they softened. In this way he pressed the leaves down layer by layer, and in no time at all the ten *jin* of tea leaves were compressed into a beautiful, neat cake of tea. And so it was done! The young man easily put the tea cake into the small basket and carried it to his fiancée's family home in high spirits, singing all the way. From that day on, people carried on the tradition of compressing tea into cakes by steaming it, and they still do to this day.

Although we have no way of knowing whether these legends sprang from real events, these two stories certainly do tell us a few things: firstly; that Liu Bao tea originated in Black Stone Village. Secondly, the fact that these stories have been passed down via oral tradition, rather than in written form, confirms that they originate from a

Liu Bao baskets come in all shapes and sizes these days. This is a one-kilogram basket that Henry produced in the early 2000s. Though there are legends surrounding using baskets, wrapping tea in some form of bamboo is very old. The two plants have had a friendship for millennia, because they work well together energetically, grow near each other and bamboo is also relatively odorless.

This is not one of the two legendary ancestor plants of Liu Bao, but it is quite an old tree and has many descendants in a garden just beneath the place where it is growing. Some people think this varietal of tea, called "zhuye," came from Hunan, but old trees like this would suggest that tea production in Liu Bao is much older than other black tea producing regions. There are also even older examples than this one in the forest.

historical period before the local people had much contact with the wider world, and before the society became literate. And lastly, they express the importance of Liu Bao tea to the generations of tea growers who have lived in the area and their sincere gratitude and esteem for the mountains, trees, and leaves that have such a lasting presence in their lives.

The Historical Origins of Liu Bao Tea plants

The two magic trees from the Liu Bao story are immortalized in legend as the ancestors of today's Liu Bao tea plants. According to some of the elderly inhabitants of Black Stone Village, there really are two such majestic old tea trees growing somewhere on the mountain, although they're very hard to find. The vegetation on Black Stone Mountain is dense, verdant subtropical rainforest, with tea plants growing wild along the roadsides, so there are a lot of places where you can find Black Stone tea trees. Most of these wild tea trees have trunks no wider than a largeish coin in diameter, and they grow across the entire mountainside. As far as we know, all these wild tea plants may well be the descendants of those two ancient monarchs, which have gradually grown and multiplied over the generations.

As for the different varieties of Liu Bao tea plant, some of the local tea growers say that the original plants came from Hunan Province's Jianghua and Dao Counties two hundred years ago, arriving in Liu Bao via Babu in Guangxi's He County, and are of the variety known in Chinese as "*zhuye* (樹葉)." This theory certainly has some evidence behind it: *zhuye* tea plants also grow in Hunan Province, and the black tea (*heicha*) from Anhua and other parts of Hunan is produced using a very similar method to Liu Bao.

However, some experts disagree with this theory, as some of the existing tea trees in Liu Bao Village are several hundred years old, with trunks reaching 30–40 centimeters in diameter, which is evidence of a tea-growing tradition stretching back much further than two hundred years. As for the similarity in production technique, this could simply indicate that there was some contact between early tea growers in Hunan and Guangxi provinces, owing to their relative geographical proximity. Nonetheless, the possibility that the tea varieties and processing techniques may have come to Liu Bao Village from Hunan hasn't been entirely ruled out. After all, Yunnan Province is considered to be the birthplace of the world's tea, so it's quite possible that teas and techniques might spread outwards along the country's many waterways. So, while we have yet to definitively establish the exact origins of the Liu Bao tea plant variety or the evolution of the manufacturing process, it's a fascinating topic that provides tea experts and scholars with plenty more scope for investigation.

現代六堡茶生產

Modern Liu Bao Tea
Production in Wuzhou City

茶人: ***Donated by Wuzhou City Agricultural Bureau***

In recent years, as the influence of Chinese black tea, or heicha, has risen, Wuzhou's Liu Bao tea has also seen a swell in popularity. Its distinctive flavor and beneficial health properties have gradually earned it renewed recognition and esteem among the world's tea lovers. Aged Liu Bao has been playfully referred to as "an antique you can drink," and is often copared to the famous vintages of puerh tea.

Liu Bao tea was originally produced in several small villages in Cangwu County, part of the Wuzhou City area in Guangxi, including Lion Village and the tea's namesake, Liu Bao Village. The industry has grown a lot since then, and Liu Bao is now produced in other surrounding villages and townships such as Cangwu County's Libu, Jingnan, and Shatou; Teng County's Lingjing, Jinji, Xinqing and Mengjiang; Mengshan County's Huangcun, Xihe and Xinwei; Cenxi City's Shuiwen, Nandu, and Daye; and two villages in districts of Wuzhou city: Wanxiu district's Wangfu Village and Dieshan District's Xiaying Village. Altogether, this equals an area of around 2866 hectares of tea plantations. There are currently 24 different tea manufacturers, and together they produce around 7300 tons of Liu Bao tea each year.

The Natural Environment of Liu Bao Tea Gardens

Wuzhou City is situated near the Tropic of Cancer and has a subtropical monsoon climate—it's hot and humid with plenty of rain. The average yearly temperature is between 19.3°C and 21.4°C, while the monthly average is over 10°C throughout Wuzhou (except for Mengshan County, where the monthly average is below 10°C). The highest recorded temperature is 39.9°C and the lowest is -3.2°C. The average yearly rainfall is between 1400–1600 millimeters, with around 1533.7–1789 hours of sunshine per year, and a typical relative humidity of 76%–82%. The region is usually frost-free for 336–349 days of the year. All these elements add up to form a climate in Wuzhou that is perfectly suited to growing tea plants.

The Wuzhou city area has a unique topography, characterized by a low-lying central region surrounded by elevated land on all sides—traditionally described using the phrase "eight mountains, one river, one field." Several rivers flow through the region, including the Xunjiang, Xijiang, Guijiang and Beiliu rivers. Altogether the total surface area of Guangxi's 784 rivers and waterways makes up 9.28% of the total land area. The area where Wuzhou Liu Bao tea leaves are grown is lush with vegetation all year round, with 72% forest coverage and a plentiful water supply. The soil is mainly clay and sandy loam and tends to be slightly acidic, with a pH level between 4.5 and 6.5. The soil layer is deep and loose, with plenty of humus, nutrients, and water, providing a fertile environment ideal for growing tea and cultivating the microorganisms that are unique to Liu Bao.

Wuzhou's geographical, climate, and soil conditions are unique to the area and contribute to the region's microbial diversity and the growth of the beneficial fungus that Liu Bao tea produces. The environment has remained reasonably stable throughout the long history of Liu Bao tea production in Wuzhou. Makers of Liu Bao traditionally aged the tea in caves, which preserved the population of beneficial microorganisms that are produced during the manufacturing process. This provided a favorable biological environment that ensured Wuzhou could continue to produce pure, authentic Liu Bao tea, with its unique characteristics that are so intimately tied to the local geography.

The Liu Bao Manufacturing Process

These days, the first of three parts of the Liu Bao production process is

done as follows: "kill-green," rolling, fermenting in piles, rolling again, and drying. The second part of processing includes sifting and shaping, separating the stalks and leaves, heaping into piles, cold fermentation, drying over a stove, steaming, pressing into baskets, and aging in a cool place.

The first half of the production process starts with the tea picking. Each bud is usually picked with three or four leaves—the tea leaves are picked during the day and processed at night. For the kill-green step (firing to halt oxidization), the temperature of the wok is 160°C and the leaves are cooked in batches of around 2–2.5 kilograms; with a kill-green machine it's around 7.5 kg each time. Once in the pan the leaves are first fired while covered, then stirred and tossed, then a combination of the two—young, tender leaves are tossed for longer, while older leaves are covered for longer. The kill-green process usually lasts 5–6 minutes, until the leaves and buds are soft and the stalks bend but don't break, and the tea leaves turn the appropriate darkish green color. After the leaves are spread out to cool they are rolled, either by hand or by machine (more often by machine these days). When rolling by hand one can roll 1–1.5 kg at a time; with machine-rolling the volume varies according to the size of the machine.

When rolling Liu Bao tea leaves the main thing is for the leaves to remain intact. Breaking down the cells of the leaves is of secondary importance—they only need to be about 40% damaged, so an appropriate amount of pressure must be used. The general process is as follows: roll lightly, press lightly, press more firmly, press lightly, roll lightly, then separate the leaves after rolling. First-grade and second-grade tea leaves are normally rolled for 40 minutes, while third-grade leaves and below are rolled for 45–50 minutes.

After rolling comes the process of heaping, where the semi-processed tea leaves are piled into baskets or onto bamboo mats to ferment. This process is key in determining the color, aroma, and flavor of Liu Bao. The damp tea leaves are piled 3–5 centimeters deep with about 1.5 kg of tea per basket, and are left to ferment for at least 15 hours. The heaping process doesn't require very high heat—the heat source need only be around 60°C, and the tea leaves should be heated until they're around 50–60% dry before heaping. The temperature of the tea piles themselves needs to stay around 40°C—if it rises above 50°C the leaves will burn, so the piles need to be turned over from time to time to dissipate the heat.

After fermenting, the rolled tea leaves will have started to unfurl slightly, so they need to be rolled again for 5–6 minutes. Then comes the drying process, which has two parts: "first firing" over high heat, then "full firing" at a lower temperature. The tea leaves are traditionally spread out about 3.3 cm deep on bamboo drying frames, and should preferably be heated using pinewood. The temperature of the flame needs to be around 80–90°C and the leaves are turned over every 5–6 minutes. Once the leaves are 60–70% dry they are taken off the heat and spread out to cool for half an hour. Then they are fired again at a temperature of 50–60°C in piles around 6.6 cm deep for 2–3 hours, until the tea stalks snap when bent.

The second part of the Liu Bao tea manufacturing process is refining the tea. These days, this begins with cold fermentation: moisture is added to the tea leaves until their water content reaches 12%; then the leaves are fermented in heaps for 7–10 days to supplement the fermentation that occurred in the early processing. When the moisture content of the leaves has been reduced to an average of around 10%,

they are steamed for half an hour, until they are completely soft and the water content has increased to 15–16%. After this, the traditional method involves storing the tea in heaps for 20–30 days, so that the moisture and heat can act on the tea leaves and further alter their chemical structure. The antioxidant action of the tea polyphenols causes an increase in compounds such as theaflavins and thearubigens, enriching the color, flavor, and aroma of the tea until it takes on the unique character of Liu Bao.

The last step in the process is an essential one: aging. Once the leaves have been steamed for the second time, they are cooled down, and the remaining moisture is allowed to evaporate. The finished Liu Bao tea is packed into baskets and piled up in cool, damp earthen storehouses to age. After about six months of aging, the liquor of the mature tea develops a deeper red color, a cool, refreshing mouthfeel, and that classic aged Liu Bao flavor. These qualities gave rise to the common epithet used to describe Liu Bao tea: "red, rich, mellow, and aged."

Distinct Characteristics

The defining features of Liu Bao are similar for both the *maocha* ("raw" or semi-processed tea leaves) and refined Liu Bao, with a couple of differences. Liu Bao *maocha* leaves are a glossy blackish-brown, with thick, heavy leaves. The liquor is a deep red with a mellow aroma and a rich, refreshing flavor; the used leaves are a reddish brown. Refined Liu Bao tea leaves have a similar dark, lustrous appearance, with the addition of "Golden Flowers," the spores of a highly-prized type of fungus that grows on the tea. The liquor is also a deep red; the flavor is mellow and refreshing with a pure aroma and a unique betel nut fragrance. Liu Bao tea can be stored for a long time—the more mature, the better.

These days, two different kinds of refined Liu Bao tea are available on the market: those made using the traditional manufacturing process, and those made using modern methods. Both kinds are essentially the same, though with some subtle differences.

The leaves of traditional hand-made Liu Bao tend to be a little thicker and weightier. The liquor is a slightly lighter red compared to machine-processed Liu Bao, a brownish-red that recalls the color of Chinese dates. By contrast, it has a stronger flavor, and when ma-

茶 Traditional processing of Liu Bao tea always included aging before the baskets even left the factories. Some factories used air raid tunnels to age the tea, alternating between the more humid tunnels and drier warehouses. Nowadays, some factories are returning to the traditional methods and aging their teas once again in earthen warehouses, like the one shown here, to make sure the tea is ripe enough before it reaches the consumer.

茶 Also known as Eurotium cristatum, most of the golden bunches are actually spores. Chinese people have always determined the quality of many teas by how much "Golden Flowers (Jin Hua)" they have. This is especially true of the brick teas of Hunan, where such mold is most desirable. Traditionally, Liu Bao tea was not characterized in this way, though it is sometimes found with this kind of mold on it, as shown here.

tured for a long time, becomes genuine aged Liu Bao.

Liu Bao made using modern methods has leaves that are fine, tightly rolled, and evenly shaped. The liquor is a deep red, while the flavor and aroma are not as strong as those of traditionally hand-made tea. The use of machinery in modern Liu Bao processing cuts down on aging time and allows the tea to be produced more efficiently.

Health Benefits

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, Liu Bao is considered a "cooling" and "warming" tea. In addition to the general health benefits that it shares with other teas, Liu Bao also has some unique properties. It can alleviate excess internal heat and ease breathing, as well as relieving heat in the summer and dispelling excess moisture. It is good for the eyesight, aids digestion, and energizes and clears the mind. It can be drunk after a meal to aid digestion, or on an empty stomach to settle the digestive system. After drinking Liu Bao you'll notice a sudden feeling of comfort and ease in both mind and body. Liu Bao is perfect for drinking when it's hot and humid—it provides relief from hot summer weather and brings a welcome sense of refreshment.

Liu Bao contains many essential amino acids, vitamins, and trace elements. In addition to this, scientific studies and the observations of Liu Bao enthusiasts both attest that this tea is more effective at breaking down fats that other types of tea, and can help lower levels of fat compounds, cholesterol, and triglycerides in the body. When drunk regularly over a long period, Liu Bao can have benefits for fitness and weight loss, as well as maintaining a restful mind and a healthy digestive system.

Brewing Methods

When brewing Liu Bao tea, the requirements for the water are a bit more particular than usual: in order to allow the nutrients in the tea to fully dissolve, it must be brewed with properly boiling water. It's important to use very hot water to "rinse" the leaves, as it cleanses the tea leaves and "awakens" the tea. If the temperature of the water is less than 100°C, it's difficult to fully achieve the rich, refreshing flavor that Liu Bao should have. It's also important to warm up your tea implements

before brewing and serving, as this also helps to awaken the active properties of the tea that have long lain dormant within the leaves.

Main Varieties

Liu Bao tea plants are bushy with densely-growing branches. The tea can be divided into four categories according to the color of the tea buds. According to an informal survey, about 60% of Liu Bao is made from green buds, around 20% from purple buds, 5% from large, light-colored leaves, and 15% from fragmented leaves. The tea made from green buds is considered superior, as well as being produced in the greatest quantity.

The tea plants naturally grow to be around 2 meters high and 80 cm wide, with densely growing branches and about 3.6 cm between joints on each twig. The leaves are oval-shaped, about 8.3 cm long and 3.6 cm wide, and grow on an upwards diagonal. The surface of the leaves is smooth and flat or slightly bulging, and the edges are serrated.

The tips of the new shoots are usually a soft green, with a few purple ones. The shoots grow closely together and don't have much fuzz, and tend to stay fairly soft and tender. Liu Bao is made from early-sprouting tea plants—the buds begin to appear in the middle of March, and are harvested in early April. By the middle third of October the trees are no longer growing sprouts, and the remaining leaves are sparse and of lesser quality. They turn a darker green with strongly serrated edges and blunt tips, and begin to curl in slightly.

Major Manufacturers & Brands of Liu Bao

Nowadays there are many brands of Wuzhou Liu Bao tea. Some of the most well-known brands in mainland China, in order of influence, are the Wuzhou Tea Factory's "Three Cranes" brand, the Wuzhou Tea Import and Export Corporation's "*Zhong Cha*" and "*Duo Te Li,*" and the Wuzhou Maosheng Tea Ind. Co., Ltd.'s "*Maosheng*" brand. In terms of overseas exports, the Wuzhou Zhong Cha Tea Co., Ltd. more or less has a monopoly on the market with its "*Duo Te Li*" brand. Other brands include The Yintai Liu Bao Tea Co., Ltd.'s "*Cang Shun*" brand, the Cangwu Liu Bao Tea Co., Ltd.'s "*Cang Song*" brand. There are also some tea brands that are named after the company that produces them, for example the Wuzhou Guding Liu Bao Tea Factory's "*Guding*" brand, the Wuzhou City Gui Jinhua Liu Bao Tea Co., Ltd.'s "*Gui Jinhua*" and "*He Shou*" brands, and the Wuzhou Qian Nian Liu Bao Tea Co., Ltd.'s "*Qian Nian* (Thousand Years)" brand.

Aside from the tea factories mentioned above, some of the other main Liu Bao tea producers in Wuzhou are the Wuzhou City Suiyuan Liu Bao Tea Factory, the Wuzhou City Gushu Liu Bao Tea Factory, the Cangwu County Huaqiang Liu Bao Black Tea Refining Factory, The Wuzhou City Xiaoya Liu Bao Tea Factory, the Wuzhou City Yuanshan Liu Bao Tea Co., Ltd., the Wuzhou City Yi Hu Chun Liu Bao Tea Factory, the Wuzhou City Liu Bao Village Heishi Mountain Tea Factory, the Wuzhou Liu Bao Mountain Tea Co., Ltd., the Guangzi Liu Bao Village Tea Co., Ltd., and the Tengxian Fuding Tea Company.

This impressive array of companies helps to paint a picture of today's flourishing Liu Bao market and the importance of this iconic tea to the Wuzhou area. As suggested by its namesake, Liu Bao Village, this is a tea that is intrinsically connected to the land it came from, and the tea we drink today has been shaped by Wuzhou's unique ecological environment, as well as the changing practices of Liu Bao tea makers over the centuries. It really has earned its status as a prized "antique."

迷霧中覺道路

茶 *On a foggy, misty morning, one of the authors, Mr. Peng (who also wrote the most thorough book on Liu Bao tea in Chinese, called simply "Liu Bao") shows us different kinds of plants and leaves used to make Liu Bao, including purple bud and zhuye. This garden is also organic, which is inspiring.*

Gongfu Tea Tips

空盛壶茶

Space or Fullness in the Pot

茶人: *Sam Gibb*

Alongside another important gongfu tea experiment, Sam brings up an amazing point in this issue: We have to find the right balance between enjoying tea and improving our art: too much relaxing and enjoying tea and we don't get better, growing lazy over time, and too much focus and we get tight and lose the relaxation and joy that is at the heart of all tea appreciation.

Almost two years ago, on the annual Global Tea Hut trip to Wuyi, I remember Master Lin mentioning that we should only fill our gongfu teapot 80% with water. This stuck with me for some reason. It didn't make sense. Why would we only fill the pot 80%—surely this would decrease the temperature of the water? When I asked Wu De about it, he told me that Master Lin always insisted that his students do the experiment before discussing the results. He also confused me by saying that some of our teapots here are exceptions to the rule. It sounded too advanced, so I put it into the "I'll get around to it later" pile, which only ever seems to grow in my case. While I was brewing tea alone I did fill the pot up one steeping and then put a little less in the next to see if I'd notice the difference, but that was too unstructured and so inconclusive. Recently, I took a course on videography and the lecturer mentioned that he had taken all his lenses and tested the sharpest focal point for each one, spending hours taking photos of soda cans. This struck a nerve in me, as this person was really committed to his art, taking the time to do long and tedious experiments that would help him excel in his craft. His devotion was inspiring to me. Shouldn't I be that committed to my tea practice?

This month's gongfu experiment was another great reminder for me to cultivate the right attitude. Wu De forced me to do the experiment myself. In Zen there is the saying, "Kill the teacher," meaning you cannot rely on your teacher for your growth. Tea, or any spiritual practice, art or discipline, is not just about intellectually knowing how to do something but about the experience of it. Part of us always wants the easiest path, the work already done, the package neatly wrapped. Waiting for this to happen expends time we could be using to find out the answers for ourselves! Wu De often says that if a student only reaches the same level as their teacher they are half their teacher. After all, the teacher had to do all the hard work to get where she is, so if the student only arrives at the same place they're not working as hard. We should surpass our teachers, in other words. (Look out Wu De!)

The ideal method of undertaking this experiment would be to have two identical Zisha gongfu pots. Use a lightly brewed tea (fewer leaves/shorter steepings), with the same amount in each pot, and brew them side by side. Completely fill one and the other only 80% of the way. Steep them for the same amount of time and then pour each into its own respective cup. Taste them back and forth, starting with the liquor from the completely filled pot. Focus on the 10 Qualities of a Fine Tea and also note the temperature difference between them.

However, this obviously requires two identical Zisha pots! For those of you that do not have two, you can still try the experiment using just one pot. Again, remember to brew your tea lightly and then alternate steeping between 80% and completely full. Because you are not comparing the cups side by side, you should definitely take notes. I find it helps to write the 10 Qualities vertically in a spreadsheet. This makes it much easier to remember what you are looking for. This may sound nerdy (and a lot of work) but it really helps! In fact, it helped me so much I've decided to include a blank form of this in the Further Readings of our blog!

As always, please go online to our discussion board on the website or social media and share your findings with the whole community. It would be interesting to hear how it went. You could also let everyone know what type of pot you are using as this makes a difference, too. We always love to hear from you!

馬來西亞尋六堡

In Search of Liu Bao
A Journey Through Malaysia

茶人: *Su Yangchun/蘇映純 (Donated by Wushing)*

The study of Liu Bao and its history eventually must lead to Malaysia, and no issue devoted to Liu Bao would be complete without a trip there. The Chinese who emigrated to Malaysia were very often miners. Many came from near Guangxi, where Liu Bao comes from, and believed in its medicinal qualities. Since mining companies therefore had to supply Liu Bao to their employees, they started purchasing in bulk to save money, and like our magazine, Liu Bao headed to Malaysia, where destiny would have it aged and appreciated.

To understand how Liu Bao came to play such a significant role in Malaysian tea culture, we must start by looking at the origins of tea drinking in Malaysia. Malaysia's largest group of tea drinkers are of Chinese origin. Most of the ethnic Chinese people in Malaysia migrated from China's southern provinces—Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan—over the course of several hundred years during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and in the early years of the Republic of China. Most of these Chinese migrants were already accustomed to drinking tea in their homeland, so after settling down in a foreign land they quite naturally sought out familiar-tasting teas to ease their longing for home. And so the custom of drinking tea was passed down through the generations to the present day.

According to the Chajin and tea shop proprietors that we met on our journey, although recently arrived Chinese in the early days weren't very fussy about their tea implements nor their surroundings, they did have a certain attachment to their teas: you could guess a person's place of origin based on which tea they drank. People from Fujian liked to drink oolong, Hakka people favored green tea, and Cantonese people from Guangdong (Canton) preferred Liu Bao or puerh. I was quite astonished to hear this, as all the information we'd researched before arriving in Malaysia had painted Liu Bao as a miner's tea, provided to workers at Malaysia's mines to relieve heat and fever. This was an impression that evolved a lot through our contact with Malaysia's Chajin.

Liu Bao was a popular everyday tea among the Cantonese people. We spoke with Liu Zicai (劉子才), the executive director of Kong Wooi Fong Tea Merchants (廣匯豐茶行), who told us of the early Guangdong natives' enthusiasm for Liu Bao. The Liu Bao tea that was imported into Malaysia in the early days of Chinese immigration already had an established grading system. First-grade, second-grade and "special-grade" teas were generally sold to restaurants and tea houses. At that time, the clientele of these establishments tended to be wealthy, influential types who were quite picky about their Liu Bao: if it wasn't up to their standards, they wouldn't drink it. The lower grades of tea were sent to the mining areas to supply the miners. Because of Liu Bao tea's ability to eliminate internal dampness and relieve excess heat and fever, it also became very popular in the mines, resulting in the long-lasting association between Liu Bao and miners. But to say than Liu Bao was only a miner's or laborer's tea certainly doesn't paint the whole picture—it was enjoyed by all kinds of people.

On this trip to Malaysia we hoped to uncover some of Liu Bao's secrets, so as well as visiting several large tea merchants in Kuala Lumpur in order to become more familiar with the tea itself, we also visited the former flourishing mining cities of Ipoh, Taiping, and Sungai Lembing to look at the old mines and get a taste of the local Liu Bao tea culture. Although we still had plenty more to learn about Liu Bao by the end of the trip, we were left with a deep and lasting impression of these unique areas which are so different from the urban metropolis of Kuala Lumpur.

A Stroll Through History: Ipoh

Ipoh (怡保) is the capital city of the state of Perak, and is situated about 200 kilometers to the north of where we flew into Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. Ipoh was the first stop on our Liu Bao journey, and an important one, too.


瑞
茶侄六山正
瑞
茶侄六山正
瑞
茶侄六山正
瑞
茶侄六山正
中国

The city has a couple of nicknames: it's known as the "Mountain City" because of its mountainous surroundings, and thanks to its many limestone caves and streams, it's also sometimes called "Little Guilin," after the city in China's Guangxi Province famed for its rivers and striking rock formations. Recent years have seen a boom in the region's tourism industry, but further back in the past, before World War II, it was a busy mining town abundant in tin ore. At that time, southern Chinese people were leaving their homeland in great numbers with dreams of making their fortune mining tin, and many of them put down roots in Ipoh. Today, the ethnic makeup of the city's residents is largely Cantonese and Hakka, and Cantonese is the primary language of communication. The prosperity of the mining industry at the time also attracted British colonialists who stationed themselves in Ipoh, so if you take a walk down the streets of the city, you can see old English buildings all over the place which remain from that period. The whole city of Ipoh has a very historical feeling to it.

While we were in Ipoh we visited a few old tea merchants; although some of them no longer sell Liu Bao, the rich cultural atmosphere and historical goods that these establishments have to offer are nonetheless fascinating. Strolling through the streets of Ipoh and stopping to peruse the old shops, you notice that Liu Bao seems not to belong exclusively in tea stores; it appears in all sorts of places, from seafood merchants to variety stores and paper puppet studios. The store owners explained that Liu Bao is such an everyday commodity that you can buy it and drink it everywhere; it's not just the purview of tea merchants. We really got the feeling that Liu Bao tea has planted itself into every corner of the local people's lives.

"Strolling through the streets of Ipoh and stopping to peruse the old shops, you notice that Liu Bao seems not to belong exclusively in tea stores; it appears in all sorts of places, from seafood merchants to variety stores and paper puppet studios. The store owners explained that Liu Bao is such an everyday commodity that you can buy it and drink it everywhere; it's not just the purview of tea merchants. We really got the feeling that Liu Bao tea has planted itself into every corner of the local people's lives."

茶 This is a wrapper from a 1970s Liu Bao that was packaged in Ipoh. Some of the Liu Bao import companies had offices in Ipoh, usually connecting Liu Bao, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

A Mountain Haven: Taiping

Taiping is one of the oldest towns in Malaysia. It is situated around 100 kilometers to the north of Ipoh. At one time it was the capital of Perak, before being replaced by Ipoh in 1937. Taiping is one of few places in Malaysia with a name of Chinese origin. Its name came about after a period of fighting and unrest between the local population and the early Chinese settlers; after the disputes were finally settled, the town was given its name to express the people's prayers for continued peace in the region—in Chinese, Taiping (太平) means "peace and tranquility." The town was home to Malaysia's first tin mine and developed earlier than Ipoh. In more recent times, as supplies of tin ore have declined, the area has instead become a well-known holiday spot, earning a growing reputation among tourists who come to enjoy the area's abundant natural resources and beautiful scenery.

Because of the booming mining industry in the early days, Taiping achieved a lot of "firsts" in Malaysia, such as the first train station, the first tin mine, and the first prison. The Taiping Lake was also the first man-made lake. The area where the lake now stands was once an abandoned mining ground that slowly accumulated water and became a lake. In 1980, it was turned into a public garden and planted with many flowers, grasses, and trees. Today, the Taiping Lake Gardens are lush and green, and filled with enchanting scenery.

After soaking up the tranquility of Taiping Lake, we ventured on to the Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve at Kuala Sepetang. In the past, this area was well-known for its charcoal exports, and the charcoal workers, just like the miners, relied on drinking Liu Bao tea to provide relief from the heat of their work. We went to visit one of the still-operating charcoal kilns—the intensely hot, dry atmosphere around the kilns is hard to bear for very long, so it's little wonder the charcoal workers needed to drink a lot of Liu Bao to refresh and rehydrate themselves.

The Simple Life: Sungai Lembing

After visiting the first two mines we continued on to another famous subterranean tin mine on Malaysia's east coast: Sungai Lembing (also known by the Chinese name Linming—林明). Home to what was once the longest and deepest underground tin mine in the world, Sungai Lembing was also governed by the British colonialists in the early days, as evidenced by the many historic English-style buildings in the area. Although the mine has now closed down, it has left a rich cultural and historical legacy in Sungai Lembing. The renowned Sungai Lembing Museum contains many restored tools and historical photographs, offering visitors a detailed view into the tin mining process over the years.

At the introduction of tea expert Mr. Qiu Shunchang (邱順昌), we met one of the miners who used to work in Sungai Lembing: a gentleman of sixty or seventy by the name of Mr. Zeng (曾). We were lucky enough to be guided around the tin mine by Mr. Zeng himself. Outfitted with original mining equipment, he gave us an introduction to the mining process. Standing there at the entrance to the mine, we could feel the cold air coming out of the ground—this all added up to a vivid picture of what it must have been like for the miners working in those underground tunnels, with their feet soaked in freezing water and cold drafts of air blowing past. It must have taken many gulps of strong, rich Liu Bao tea to warm their stomachs and chase away the damp. Mr. Zeng told us that in those days, the owners of the mine would always provide Liu Bao tea—if they didn't, they wouldn't be able to find any miners willing to work for them!

Aside from its famous tin museum, Sungai Lembing is also known today for its beautiful mountain sunrises. Every year, tourists from all around arrive to stay in the village guesthouses and catch a glimpse of the ethereal sea of clouds as the dawn breaks over the mountains. Our tea master, Mr. Qiu, suggested that we combine our appreciation of the local scenery with our quest to learn about tea, and so we headed to the top of the mountain to welcome in the sunrise while tasting some Liu Bao. In the first glimmer of dawn and the fresh morning air, our hearts were full with the beauty of the tea.

On the course of our journey through Malaysia in search of a deeper understanding of Liu Bao, we came across many interesting people and places that were all connected to Liu Bao tea in their own way. It felt like we were drawing away a veil; and yet, this tea, with its long history, still holds many mysteries. There are many more layers of cloth for us to slowly peel away, revealing still more about Liu Bao's flavor and origins. For me, the joyful and poignant moments of our Malaysian journey have added another layer of depth to Liu Bao tea: the indelible flavor of personal memories.

Sunrise Tea: Mount Lembing

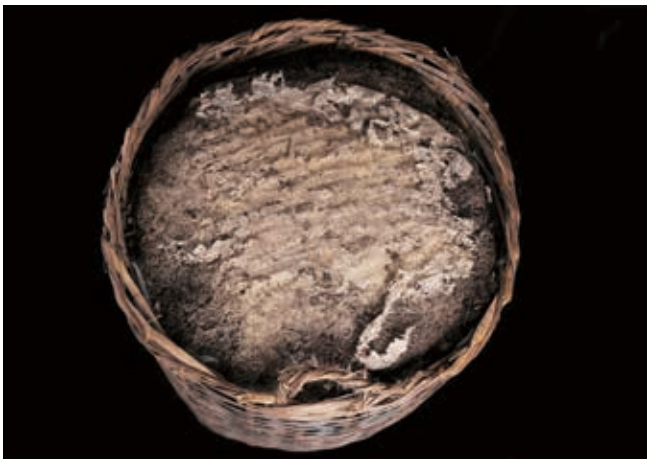
While in Eastern Malaysia. Tea master Lin Ping Xiang (林平祥) and Shunchang Qiu (邱順昌) took us to a mountain along the seashore to watch the sunrise while sipping fantastic Liu Bao tea.

We left at 4am to climb Lembing Mountain in the pitch dark. We arrived at the peak before the crack of dawn to view the sunrise. To our surprise, the masters were very prepared, bringing a full tea set with them. Besides a nice picnic blanket, they had exquisite antique Yixing pots, Ming Dynasty porcelain cups, charcoal, a brazier and, of course, very fine water. They even brought cushions for us all to sit on. These Chajin understand tea! The coals heating clean spring water and the most suitable teaware were the perfect combination, producing a pot of tea that left us savoring the flavor and fragrance for hours. Master Lin said that in gongfu tea, none of the important elements can be compromised, helping the tea to reach its full potential, unfolding all its subtleties. After that day, I'd have to agree!

We tasted sweet YSC Old Label Liu Bao tea to quench our thirst and catch our breath after the long hike up the mountain. Then we picked the stronger Zhong Cha to give us a boost and start the day off right. After that, PL LLLL367 was ready, and the first rays of sun shone exquisitely on the reddish tea liquor. This momentary union of Heaven, Earth, Tea and human beings moved us beyond words! We fell silent… The fourth tea was the "Four Golden Coins (四金錢)" from *Shenchang Xuanzhuang* (慎昌選莊). A soft sweetness unfolded alongside the twilight of a beautiful dawn! Then came the grand finale, "Joy to the World" (*Pu Tian Gong Qing*, 普天共慶, "Diamond Grade Yuandu," 原度), the best Liu Bao there is! The rich aroma spread out from the tip of our tongues like a drop of water rippled across the surface of a pond, just as the morning sun lit up the surroundings and our souls... As we sat on the highest spot in Kuantan, savoring such fantastic Liu Bao tea, the spectacular sunshine brightened the long-forgotten Liu Bao tea culture of Malaysia.

Vintage Liu Bao
King of Black Teas

No matter how you rank the best black teas in the world, Liu Bao is certainly amongst the best. We decided to show you some famous vintages which are paragons of the genre, starting with the best of the best, which is actually amongst the most wonderful teas we have ever tried, full stop.



Considered the best Liu Bao tea in the world, and one of the best teas we have ever tried in general, is 1950s Pu Tian Gong Qing or "Joy to the World." It was named by Master Lin himself. It was a higher grade of Liu Bao reserved for the managers and owners of the mines. Some people think that this tea may have been produced from Yunnanese raw material traded to Guangxi in a year of lower yield, arguing that beneath the processing it has a puerh body. Master Lin thinks that this is not true, however. "Joy to the World" is a deep and gorgeous tea that fills your being, bringing bliss in waves.


普天共庆

1970s Shuang Xing Hao Yin (双星号印 / SSHC Penang) is amongst our favorite Liu Bao teas, mostly because it seems to be easier to find and therefore more accessible than teas like 1950s Fu Hua or LLLL367 (both of which are better). SSHC is red and mellow, billowy and nutty. It has fragrant elements, tasting of Chinese herbs, sometimes sandalwood and, of course, betel nut. It feels rich in the mouth while staying lighter and more clear than puerh teas of a similar vintage. The Qi is strong, bold and vibrant and makes for a deep and lasting session. SSHC is very patient and, we find, often wonderful in the late afternoon or early evening.

Guangxi Wuzhou Tea Factory's (广西梧州茶厂) famous "VIVE" from the 1980s is a deep and rich Liu Bao, with loamy flavors that taste of autumn forest walks. It has the deeper, wetter and hotter piling of the 1980s, which began due to the influence of shou puerh. It is thicker and richer than earlier Liu Bao vintages, though it lacks their refinement, grace and glory. It is still wonderful, reminding you of camphor and thick, dreamy days. This tea is deep and patient, with a more grounding Qi that relaxes and loosens the moment, descending to the core and bringing the warmth of a bath on a cold day.

Shou Puerh & Liu Bao

茶人: *Shen Su*

As a student of the Leaf who too often mistakes his black tea for shou puerh or vice versa, I would personally love to hear your thoughts on these two very different teas, either via email (globalteahut@gmail.com) or on our discussion board on the website under the tab "Connect." I will also be comparing these two teas as my homework throughout this month and sharing my thoughts with you.

As we enter the middle of winter for most of us, we continue to drink darker, older and more fermented or roasted teas to keep us warm! Among that honorary group of winter-appropriate teas, we are often compelled towards shou puerh and Liu Bao black tea (pronounced "show" and "leo," respectively). They both love to be drunk in the winter! When drinking shou puerh and Liu Bao, it is clear that they are a lot alike. But they also have characteristic differences that make them both quite unique. It will be important to focus on the differences between these two teas in order to understand which one we are drinking.

Why These Two Teas

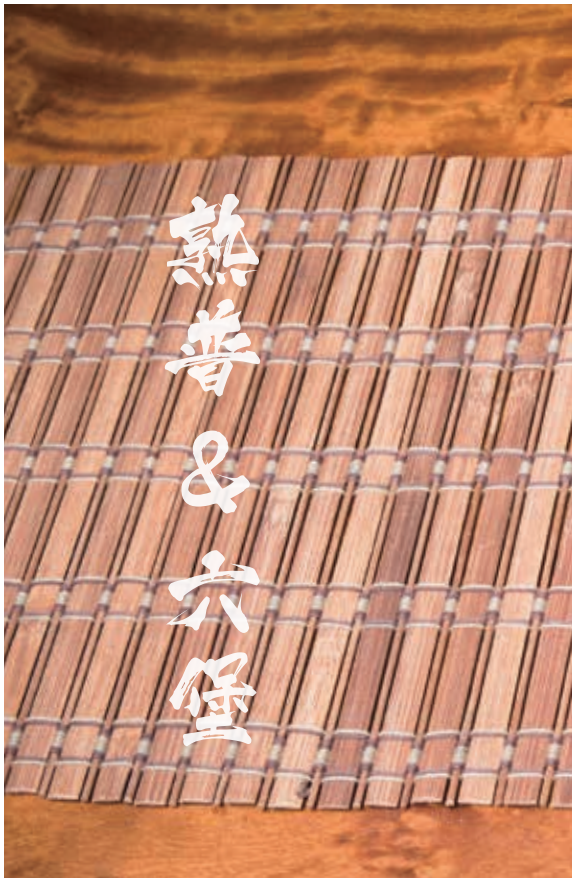
First of all, in order to learn to taste the differences between any teas, you need to drink them! Gongfu tea would be an excellent brewing method to taste these two genres of tea. But, you will have to work with what you have got. It can be a little difficult to drink a lot of some genres of tea that aren't particularly available or widely known about, like certain black teas. In fact, for some of you, this will be the first Liu Bao black tea you have ever drunk, which makes it a good chance to familiarize ourselves with some of the more common qualities associated with this type of black tea.

Next, why are even looking at the differences between shou puerh and Liu Bao? Does this somehow suggest that they share enough similarities to warrant a discussion on their differences? Well, yes and no. For those who grew up drinking black tea, shou puerh and aged sheng puerh, or for the experienced connoisseurs out there, it might seem unnecessary to even talk about this as they are so obviously different. But for many of us who are new to black or puerh tea, it is well worth comparing the two because our palates aren't as accustomed to these genres, and to the uninitiated they do share some similarities. Also, because the popularity of puerh tea greatly overshadows that of black tea, and because shou puerh is cheaper and more accessible than aged sheng puerh, it's no wonder that anytime we find ourselves drinking a dark, fermented tea, we tend to think it is shou puerh.

Sometimes we mistakenly assume we are drinking shou puerh when in fact we are drinking Liu Bao. One could also mistake black tea for aged sheng puerh, though this is less often the case in my observations. From a production point of view, it also makes more sense to confuse black tea with shou puerh because they both go through similar steps of post-production artificial fermentation, which lends them both similar profiles. But much of what distinguishes these teas is the different terroirs and varietals. The environments in which both tea plants grow are very different and the tea plants themselves are very different. In general, shou puerh is made from large-leaf tea varietals in Yunnan province, whereas Liu Bao is made from medium-leaf tea varietals in Guangxi province. (There isn't usually a "medium-leaf" category. There are small and large leaf categories, but the actual size of leaves used to produce Liu Bao are somewhere in between, so we say "medium.") We must learn to distinguish the different environments in the cup, and move from there to the subtler differences in processing.

Differences

Good shou puerh should be thick, milky, round in texture, sweet, creamy and very dark in color. The aroma and flavor of shou puerh always reminds me of mulched leaves, or wet decomposing leaves on a forest floor. It's a very earthy and enjoyable quality in my experience. Remember, flavors and aromas are not reliable measures of a fine tea because they are so subjective. What tastes like mulched leaves to me in shou puerh might taste like something quite different to you. But if it's a consistent quality that you notice in a particular tea, then it can help you to decipher what type of tea you are



drinking. Due to its earthiness, I also find shou puerh quite grounding, making it excellent to drink when you or your guests need a little balance. As well, shou tea can be quite warming in the body, and never really offers the opposite experience. Try drinking a shou puerh in the midst of summer and see what happens. You will likely end up sweating bullets! Though I love the flavor of shou, I don't drink it in the hotter times of the year for just that reason. Its warming Qi is not suitable for hot weather, but it is worth a try to gain an experiential understanding.

Liu Bao tea, on the other hand, can be both warming and cooling. This is one of the amazing qualities of some black teas. I more often drink them in the cooler months of the year, but they can be very enjoyable even in the summer under the right conditions. In the winter, however, shou is almost always more warming than Liu Bao in my experience. And while they are both quite dark teas, I find shou is usually slightly darker in the liquor and in the spent leaves. Not always, but often. In comparison to shou, Liu Bao also tends to be lighter in body and texture, with a more rising or uplifting quality. One very unique characteristic often found in Liu Bao is a metallic aftertaste. True, it is a flavor, and therefore subjective, but it tends to be generally agreed upon that Liu Bao has a metal-like quality on the tongue. This is an important quality to look out for. See if you notice it in this month's tea. Another common flavor associated with Liu Bao is the fragrance of betel nut. This is something I am not familiar with at all, but for those of you who are, see if you can also notice it. Liu Bao also has an aftertaste of smoked pine because pinewood is used in the drying process. It is also often earthy like shou, but, as you can see, Liu Bao has some distinguishing characteristics as well.

If you can, drink them side by side or one after the other to really highlight these differences. We did just that for one of our tea classes here at the center and shared a group discussion afterwards. We drank a shou followed by a Liu Bao and there was a lot of agreement in our observations. The shou was more earthy, thick, sweet, warming and grounding, whereas the Liu Bao was lighter, rising, "piney" with a metallic aftertaste, and with more noticeable mouth sensations like splash, coating, saliva production, *hui gan*, etc. (The Liu Bao was finer in this case, but could go the other way depending on the tea. Many shou puerhs are great as well.)

In general, if you find yourself drinking a dark, fermented tea, here are some qualities to think about if you're not quite sure what tea it is. If it has a metallic aftertaste, aromatic hints of betel nut, or smoked pine with an uplifting Qi that comfortably warms the body in cooler weather or cools the body in warmer temperature, you might very well be drinking Liu Bao black tea. If your tea is thick and dark, creamy and sweet, with strong earthy flavors and very warming energies, and perhaps has an unfortunate pondy flavor or aroma to it, it's likely you are drinking a shou puerh. As you can see, they really are very different teas and we should learn to refine our palates to distinguish between them.

These are very broad guidelines to learning the difference between shou puerh and Liu Bao. Within each genre and each type of tea lies a completely unique experience and so it's difficult to generalize. There is a vast variety of flavors, aromas and mouth sensations for shou and Liu Bao tea. Plus, the brewing method, amount of leaf, length of infusion, type and temperature of water, etc., can change everything! But here are some criteria that we can work with to start learning how to differentiate these wonderful teas. Let us know how your journey steeps!

Introducing Global Tea Hut Expansion Packs

We've developed a new and exciting way to expand your tea education. If this trial run works and you find these expansions fulfilling, we plan to offer three or four of them a year. Each will come with two or more teas that expand upon the topics we are covering in that issue, allowing you to taste different, rarer and sometimes higher-quality examples in order to learn more about various genres of tea.

All of the teas that we share in Global Tea Hut are partially or completely donated. Over the years, we have shared simple, clean teas that remind us to celebrate all the simple moments of our lives, as well as bright and transcendent examples of rare and unique teas that epitomize their genres. Due to the generosity of Chajin who understand our mission, we've been able to drink rare aged puerhs and uniquely crafted or roasted oolongs that were way beyond the budget of this project. But there will always be a much greater variety of tea than we could ever send you, both in kind and quality. Some teas are too rare to get in the amounts we would need to send with our magazine and others are just too expensive for our friends to donate, no matter how strongly they support our message. And yet, a large part of the motivation for including tea with this magazine is that the education in tea we are providing isn't just intellectual, but experiential. Drinking twelve unique teas together every year is more than half of what Global Tea Hut is about! And now, it will be about more.

Many of you have been emailing us over the years asking for a way to go deeper into the rarer genres we cover, how to get more of a particular Global Tea Hut tea and other questions concerning furthering your tea education by drinking more and different examples of the many kinds of tea we talk about in these magazines. The difficulty is that we aren't tea merchants, we are a tea school. And we don't have a lot of experience buying tea online, so we don't know where to send you. Also, in our commitment to stay ad-free and not endorse any one tea brand, merchant or shop, we prefer to abstain from recommending any given tea merchant, even if they are a friend or supporter of our Center. We have consequently been thinking of ways to expand your experience in tea in a clean and upright way that will help you to get to know various genres better. The Light Meets Life fundraisers we have done, creating very small batches of puerh and dian hong as well as a small amount of cool teaware, have not only raised a nice amount of money towards the construction of our future Center, but have also helped many of you taste unique teas you wouldn't have otherwise discovered. However, we wanted a way to grow your tea experience and wisdom that would be more topic-focused and allow those of you who rarely (if ever) visit Asia to feel more included in the subjects that we are discussing here by tasting a greater array of examples than just the one or two pots of tea we're sending you each month. Well, now we've come up with an idea worth trying.

Introducing the *Global Tea Hut Expansion Packs*. Every few months, we plan to offer a limited number of expansions to the topic we are covering in detail any given month. If this works, and you enjoy having these expansions, we may offer them three or maybe four times a year depending on time and availability. The idea is that when we can, we'll release a limited edition expansion to the topic covered in that month's magazine, affording you the chance to drink at least a couple more examples of the type of tea we are discussing. Often, these extras will be rarer and/or important to your journey exploring that kind of tea. This will be our first, trial run of this idea to see whether or not you enjoy it and feel that it really does improve your tea education, helping us explore and grow together month to month. If it does, we will do three or four such expansions next year as well.

特別加長版

www.globalteahut.org/expansions

Each expansion pack will be exclusively for Global Tea Hut members and only available by contacting us. We will keep the expansions transparent, letting you know our cost for the tea, shipping and how much we think is a fair minimum donation. As with all our work, you will be able to choose the amount you donate based on the cost of the tea and the minimum suggested donation, which will not be much more than what we have paid. The expansion packs will be limited, and distributed on a first-come-first-serve basis. If we find that demand for them is high, and that they are really helping you to explore different teas and learn more, then we will try to make more next time.

Liu Bao is a very rich genre of tea, with a lot for one to learn. One of the reasons we have included so many articles on the history of this magical tea is that Liu Bao is an aged tea, like puerh, so its history has much more bearing on the genre, since we often find ourselves drinking teas that were processed very differently than farmers do today. In other words, a trip to Liu Bao is not necessarily going to help you understand how the aged Liu Bao you are drinking was made. For that, you will have to research historical records, talk to old-timers and drink the different vintages yourself. Some of you who have been around here for a while will remember the other two Liu Bao teas we have sent out (a year 2000 Liu Bao and Old Grove, which was from 2008), but for some of you this will be your first exposure to Liu Bao (and maybe even black tea as a genre). For our first expansion pack, we wanted to offer you the opportunity to try two older, rarer vintages of Liu Bao, in the hopes that they would help you further understand the articles in this issue, as well as develop a greater appreciation for this wonderful genre of tea. So, here's this month's expansion pack:

- ***20 grams of 1970s SSHC Liu Bao (Shuang Xing Hao Yin, 双星号印)***

- ***20 grams of 1980s Eight Directions Liu Bao (Ba Zhong Liu Bao, 八中六堡)***

These two teas are wonderful examples of vintage Liu Bao and amongst the best you can find without getting into the older and much more expensive baskets. They also will allow you to taste the changes in processing over time that we have discussed in these pages, since the piling methods changed in the 1980s. Both were stored in Malaysia until now.

Our cost for these two teas, including shipping to Taiwan and packaging, is just under $40. For this first experimental foray into offering expansion packs, we only produced fifty sets and we are going to ask for a suggested minimum donation of $50 plus shipping, which Shen thinks will be $15 or less to most places in the world. You can donate anything you want above that. All proceeds will support our free Center.

Register for yours by emailing: globalteahut@gmail.com

We will also have a page on our site with information on how many expansion packs are left and a discussion board so that those who do choose to participate can discuss what they have learned together.

Tracing the History of Liu Bao Tea

茶人: *He Zhiqiang*/陳淦邦 *(Donated by Wushing)*

Looking into future issues about Liu Bao, with a goal of moving deeper and deeper into the topic, including planning some trips there ourselves to cover spring processing, we thought it best to inclue as many articles as possible on the history and production of Liu Bao through time in this issue, exhausting all the different perspectives and accounts of the history of Liu Bao. Having learned about the history and processing methods from many angles, we'll be ready to travel there together next time. This article is one of our favorite summaries.

Liu Bao tea is renowned both in China and abroad for its rich history. It got its name from the place it was originally produced: Liu Bao Village (六堡鎮) in Cangwu County, in the Wuzhou City area of Guangxi province ("Liu Bao" means "Six Castles" or "Six Forts"). The mountainous region of Liu Bao is located near the Tropic of Cancer and has a unique natural environment with strong sunlight—wild tea plants have grown there for a very long time and were recognized and used by the early inhabitants of the region. A well-known tea expert from mainland China, the late Professor Zhuang Wanfang (莊晚芳), has determined that the history of Liu Bao tea production can be traced back more than 1500 years, based on studies of historical texts including the *Tong Jun Records* from the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Born in the embrace of Liu Bao Village's beautiful mountains and rivers and destined to become prized around the world, Liu Bao tea was created through a union of nature and human culture.

The *Cangwu County Records,* published in 1697, the 36th year of the Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign, contain the following excerpt: "The Liu Bao tea produced in Duoxian Village in Cangwu has a rich flavor that does not change even when left overnight; the color and fragrance are excellent." During the reign of the Qing Emperor Jiaqing (1796–1820), Liu Bao was classified as one of China's 24 famous teas of that period, owing to its unique betel nut aroma. The following record appears in the *Guangxi Tongzhi*, a geographical reference book: "The production of Liu Bao tea is flourishing in Cangwu, especially the Six Castles (Liu Bao) and Five Castles (Wu Bao) teas from Duoxian Village. Liu Bao tea is particularly famous, and is selling in great quantities at ports in Guangzhou, Fujian, Hong Kong, and Macau." Liu Bao tea was traditionally compressed into tea bricks using bamboo baskets, and the most highly regarded teas were produced in Gongzhou Village and Heishi Village within the Liu Bao township.

There's a poem by famous scholar Cheng Yuandao (程遠道) from the late Qing Dynasty that goes: "The mountains are piled high with Liu Bao tea; it regulates digestion wonderfully. Drink a cup tonight while entertaining a lord; tomorrow the scent will linger on your teeth and cheeks." In the past, since land transportation routes were not yet very developed, Liu Bao tea had to be transported to Guangzhou via waterways. During the late Qing Dynasty and the early years of the Republic, Liu Bao Village was producing bamboo, wood, and charcoal in addition to tea, and trade was flourishing. Guangdong tea merchants set up on Liu Bao Village's Hekou Street to purchase Liu Bao *maocha*—unprocessed tea leaves—and then steam them in baskets to compress the tea. They used small boats to transport the tea leaves from the dock at Hekou to Cangwu County's Li port, then packed them onto large wooden galleys to Fengkai County. From there the tea was taken on motorboats along the Xijiang River to Guangzhou, and finally exported to places like Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur. This route became known as the "Ancient Tea-Boat Road."

After 1951, when large-scale land reforms came along, farmers found themselves in possession of land. At this time, many farmers started planting tea bushes again, and the area of the tea plantations grew rapidly. By 1953, Wuzhou had more than ten privately-owned tea enterprises, large and small, with Liu Bao tea as their main product. For a long time these were mostly family-run tea processing workshops, which limited the growth of the Liu Bao tea industry. In 1954, the state began rapidly expanding the tea production industry and started to prohibit privately-owned tea businesses from purchasing the raw tea leaves.

茶 *Qing Dynasty Liu Bao Production.*

The state began to regulate the grade and sale price of the tea leaves and the Supply and Marketing Department was in charge of purchasing the raw *maocha*, which was all shipped to the Wuzhou Tea Factory for final processing. So it was that the production methods of Liu Bao tea in Wuzhou shifted from the traditional hand-processing that had been the norm for a long time to large-scale industrialized production.

The characteristic steps in traditional Liu Bao tea production are "heaping" (a process known as *wodui,* 渥堆, which involves fermenting in moist piles), compression by steaming, and aging—the longer the tea is aged, the better the quality. Liu Bao is widely described using a well-known set of words: "red, rich, pure and mellow" (*hong, nong, chen, hou*—紅, 濃, 陳, 醇). The traditional manufacturing process consists of the following steps:

raw leaves → sifting to separate → heaping → initial steaming → steaming in piles → breaking up the piles → spreading out the leaves to cool → second steaming → packing into bamboo baskets → aging in storage

The finished Liu Bao tea is divided into grades from one to five. The required qualities for a first-grade Liu Bao tea are as follows: the tea leaves should be tightly twisted and of even size and shape, of a blackish-brown color with a glossy appearance. The flavor of the tea should be mellow and rich with a betel nut taste, the liquor bright red, and the brewed leaves tender and evenly sized.

In recent years, Chinese black teas (as distinct from red teas) have become popular throughout the world and are increasingly sold overseas. Liu Bao tea has earned the esteem of many a tea lover thanks to its health benefits and distinctive character. The well-known general director of the Guangxi Tea Institute, Mr. Liang Yongliang (梁永良), compares Liu Bao tea to "black gold, with many health benefits." The people of Wuzhou have a particularly high regard for aged Liu Bao, and have expressed their admiration with this verse: "When it touches your mouth you'll have worries no more; when it lands in your stomach your spirit will soar." With the enthusiastic support of both the Guangxi Autonomous Region and the Wuzhou City governments, the Liu Bao tea industry developed quite rapidly, and this ancient tea once again began to glow with youthful vigor.

In 2009, the Wuzhou municipal committee and city government published a document entitled *Decisions on promoting the industrial development of Liu Bao tea production,* which marked the beginning of a favorable period of rapid development for the industry. The consumer market expanded from the original two provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi to include more than ten provinces, cities and regions throughout China, including major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an. Both Liu Bao tea and some travel destinations connected to Liu Bao production were selected as part of Wuzhou City's "Top ten fine foods and beautiful landscapes," and the Wuzhou Tea Factory's "Three Cranes" trademark was officially recognized as one of Guangxi's famous trademarks. This treasured black tea from Guangxi has traveled a long path throughout history's many seasons, and it seems Liu Bao tea is now welcoming a flourishing spring!

一百竹簍

One Hundred Baskets
A Century of Liu Bao Tea

茶人: *Luo Yingyin/羅英銀* *(Donated by Wushing)*

Our final article in this Liu Bao series is a larger, wide-angle perspective of the last hundred years of Liu Bao history, covering Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore and Malaysia as well. Having passed through the legends and myths, the connection with past and present Malaysian Chinese culture, Liu Bao processing (modern and past) it is good to wrap it all up by taking a step back and looking at the past century with an eagle's-eye overview of everything we've learned so far.

Small bamboo rafts carried Liu Bao tea down the winding Liu Bao River from tea-growing areas including Buyi, Siliu, Tangping, Lichong, Wutong, and Gaojian. The tea traveled along the Xijiang River system and finally arrived in Guangzhou for collection and distribution. From there, it was carried to homes of overseas Chinese throughout the world.

Liu Bao tea is a post-fermentation black tea. In Chinese medical terms, it is said to effectively remove heat, dispel dampness, and detoxify the body. These features made it an essential item carried by Chinese emigrants as they left their hometowns. Early overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia drank Liu Bao tea to relieve dysentery and cool the body. It is also said that when their children suffered from diarrhea, they would place Liu Bao tea and spring water in an earthen pot and bring it to a boil over a high flame. Once cooled slightly, they added a moderate amount of winter honey. When consumed, it provided instant benefit.

Aside from the above health factors, Liu Bao tea also greatly benefited from the portside location of its tea production area, which facilitated immediate export. Wuzhou is one of the starting points of China's maritime Silk Road. In the past, it was the great southwest's most convenient export route. In 1897, Imperial Japan forced Wuzhou to become a treaty trading port, and tea became a significant resource in their economic plunder. This is another factor that greatly contributed to Liu Bao's status as the tea with the highest volume of exports to overseas Chinese.

Wuzhou Liu Bao tea was primarily shipped along the Xijiang River for sale abroad. Consequently, it is also known as "Expatriate Tea." As far back as the Qing Dynasty Jiaqing period (1796–1820), Liu Bao tea farmers shipped their tea out of the mountainous growing areas on bamboo rafts to Guangzhou. There, it was put onto boats and shipped throughout the world. Records indicate that Liu Bao tea exports from Wuzhou exceeded 1100 tons in 1935. Consequently, Liu Bao tea has also been called Xijiang River basin "Boat Merchant Tea."

Liu Bao Tea Caused the Development of Ripe Puerh

The quality and flavor of Liu Bao tea is uniquely characterized as red, rich, mellow, and pure. In addition, it is often sold as "aged Liu Bao" or "disregarding years," which shows the excellent quality of this tea. In terms of quality and trademark, "aged" or "old" are always used to emphasize this characteristic of Liu Bao tea. This factor has also contributed to the emphasis on fermentation in Liu Bao tea production.

The earliest detailed written record of Liu Bao tea production techniques is found in *Tea Collection and Production Methods*, published in June 1957 by the Guangxi province Supply and Marketing Cooperative. It states: "Liu Bao tea originated in Liu Bao township, Cangwu county. Its production craft is relatively unique. Neither black tea nor green tea, it is unique to this province, and so it is named Liu Bao tea after the production area. Its fermentation process sets it apart. Following heating (*sha qing*) and rolling (*rou nian*), it undergoes post-fermentation in piles for several hours before being dried." This text clearly specifies that the production technique involves post-fermentation in piles.

According to Zou Jiaju's *Yunnan Ripe Tea*, prior to 1948, only pressed Yunnan tea was shipped to Hong Kong. During the early 1950s, most Yunnan tea shipped to Hong Kong changed to packages of loose leaf tea.

That period happens to coincide with the communist revolution, when the popularity of loose leaf Liu Bao tea packed in bamboo baskets peaked in Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia. Hong Kong tea sellers were inspired by the mellow fragrance of Liu Bao that resulted from pile storage. Based on market demand, they began to experiment with processing methods using humid environments such as cellars and warehouses to accelerate the post-fermentation of Liu Bao and puerh tea. The market continued to change, and, by the late 1950s, this type of "flood tea" gradually came to dominate Hong Kong tea houses. Consumers widely appreciated the mellow fragrance, red liquor, and brown base of this ripe tea.

Due to the above factors, the Native Produce & Animal Byproducts Import & Export Company (CNNP), Yunnan Branch initiated experimentation into post-fermentation of tea for export. It is said that Wuzhou tea factories still employ staff who were sent from Yunnan to learn post-fermentation techniques for ripe puerh production. As the culmination of this study and investigation, CNNP Yunnan successfully produced ripe puerh tea in 1973.

Traditional Liu Bao Tea: Red, Rich, Mellow & Pure

Liu Bao tea is primarily produced for export to overseas Chinese. It seems likely that Liu Bao production techniques were gradually perfected over a long time based on the requirements of Cantonese or Hong Kong tea merchants.

The "corner pile fermentation" performed following firing and rolling is also known as "wet pile fermentation." This procedure is crucial to the unique quality of Liu Bao tea. Its goal is to hasten the transformation of the tea's internal substances through the warmth and humidity of the wet pile process, thereby reducing bitterness and causing the flavor to become pure and mild.

The unique character of Liu Bao tea is then catalyzed through the careful "cold fermentation" procedure (as opposed to the thermal fermentation earlier on). The processed tea material is first dried over a pine fire. Moisture is then added to the tea until it reaches a suitable level of wetness. It is then pile-fermented for seven to ten days to supplement deficiencies in the initial fermentation. In traditional production techniques, however, steamed tea was stored in piles for 20 to 30 days. The primary function of the wet fermentation is to accelerate changes to internal substances in the tea, thereby causing materials such as theaflavins and thearubigins to increase. The color and fragrance of the tea increases, which gives Liu Bao tea its characteristic style.

The Liu Bao tea produced in Wuzhou is distinguished by another important feature—namely, its aging process is unlike that of other teas. After fermentation, Liu Bao tea is generally stored in air raid shelters to age. The temperature, humidity, and microorganisms are extremely beneficial in aging the tea. The tea is stored in this environment for two to three years before being sold. This relatively long aging process is another characteristic of Liu Bao tea, which distinguishes it from the brief aging process of other types of Black Tea.

Another unique aspect of the aging process contributes to the special mellow purity of Liu Bao tea. This is due to the fact that early Liu Bao tea was transported by water, which further helped to shape the character of the tea. The tea was shipped along the Liu Bao River on bamboo rafts, which unintentionally helped contribute to its unique quality. The damp environment on the river with water constantly splashing onto the bamboo baskets, combined with the hot sun, caused the tea to continuously ferment and age. This shipping process further contributed to the mellow fragrance of the tea.

One Hundred Years of the Rise and Fall of Liu Bao Tea

Today, it is still not clearly known when Liu Bao began to grow and produce tea. However, historical records indicate that Liu Bao tea was listed among the 24 great teas during the Qing dynasty Jiaqing period (1796–1820).

Before World War II, Liu Bao tea was praised by Chinese in Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia and experienced brisk sales. Other factors contributed to the rapid development in Liu Bao tea, including low shipping costs and stable governments in major buying areas including Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, and Malaysia. In addition to Liu Bao, large growing areas sprang up in neighboring regions and production volumes increased.

At the height of Liu Bao tea, tea farmers brought their initially processed tea to Hekou Street. During the tea harvest, this street was filled with the sound of trading. To this day Liu Bao town still contains a tea collection place, which provides a glimpse of the spectacle of those days. According to local elders, many tea companies were established in those years. Large tea companies from all over set up branches in Liu Bao. These included famous tea companies such as Yingji,

永遠無價

Wanshen, Guangyuantai, Xieji, Tianshunxiang and Shenchang.

Major Hong Kong tea companies successively moved into Liu Bao and began buying tea. Of these, Guangyuantai is the most famous. At the time, the same trademarks were printed on the bamboo baskets used to ship the tea and on the pillars outside the buildings of the large tea companies.

Liu Bao tea's long period of prosperity came to an end in 1937 when Japan invaded China, and Guangzhou fell into enemy hands. During the ten years of great decline between 1937 and 1949, many of the tea companies stopped production or went bankrupt. A resurgence in the production of Liu Bao tea occurred after the revolution in 1951. Land reform returned land to farmers, and tea production was greatly expanded. In addition, the highway between Liu Bao and Guangdong opened in 1957, which also helped accelerate growth of Liu Bao tea.

This period of prosperity during the 1950s did not last long. In 1958, communes were formed and the Three Red Banners (General Line for Socialist Construction, Great Leap Forward, and People's Communes) were initiated. The Liu Bao tea industry, having just emerged from the darkness, was once again pushed into a period of uncertainty. The Great Leap Forward was carried out on a grand scale for approximately three years. It gradually came to an end in late 1960, but Liu Bao tea production was greatly reduced.

Another significant factor contributed to the decline of Liu Bao tea. At the time, purchase prices for Liu Bao tea were low—often lower than those of green tea of the same grade. Green tea processing is easier than that of Liu Bao tea, however, causing tea farmers to switch to green tea production. This severely damaged the traditional post-fermentation craft of Liu Bao tea. An even more significant factor, however, came from the communal or collective tea farms and factories. Tea farmers no longer approached their work with the dynamism of the past. Tea plantation management, production, and quality gradually fell. Local elders recount with sadness that the traditional "age" and "red" of Liu Bao tea had changed. Traditional techniques were lost, and Liu Bao tea gradually disappeared from the Hong Kong and Macau markets.

夕陽茶亭

Setting Sun

Tea Hut Under the Moon

茶人: *Ben Youngbaer*

When you hear about a Global Tea Hut member setting out to build his own tea hut in America, you feel moved to visit such spaces and eventually make your own tea space a bit nicer. Ben's story is inspiring. It's one of the best we've shared in this magazine, as it shows that the more you put into your tea practice, the more it changes you and those around you. If the world had the heart of Ben, and a few more tea huts, it would be a merrier place, indeed!

Last fall, I embarked on a project with my dad that has forged a new chapter in my tea life. Once a flutter of a grand idea and before long an attainable reality: my own tea hut. Named "Setting Sun Tea Hut" because it faces west where the sun sets over the glorious green mountains, and also because we are on the opposite side of the Earth from "the land of the rising sun" so I thought it to be quite fitting, since it is modeled after Japanese tea huts.

My dad and I cut some cedar posts from our woods to serve as the corner posts as well as the rafters. Our construction began the next day and lasted only about ten full work days before the last shingle was placed. Not only does this hut allow for a space dedicated to tea, it also gives me the opportunity to share tea with friends, family, neighbors and strangers alike. To mark the completion of the Hut (although not fully complete), I had an opening on October 3rd of last year with many past, present and future Global Tea Hut members—many of us in Vermont, but also some tea friends from New York and New Jersey.

Over the many months since the opening, I have had small gatherings mostly involving Japanese tea ceremony (*chanoyu*). I prepare the charcoal and the tools needed for the ceremony. Even in the coldest moments (this winter was rather mild), a bowl of matcha will warm and sooth the soul. This month I had an open (tea) house where I offered a spring *chanoyu*, switching from the sunken hearth to the standing brazier and also sharing April's tea of the month—Moonlight White.

I first encountered this tea on my trip to China in 2012. We heard the legend of the moonlight drying and accepted it to the same extent we accept Bodhidharma ripping off his eyelids and tea trees growing up as a result. When a tea is good, it almost doesn't matter the legend or flowery language used to sell it. Often we recognize a good tea as being easy to brew as well as being durable and suitable for long tea sessions. This tea of the month certainly fits the bill of a quality tea that is easy to enjoy.

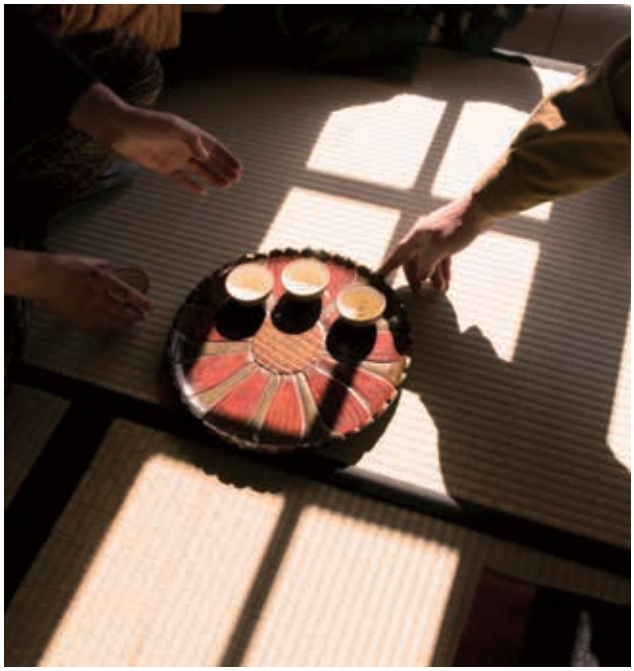
Throughout my event, people came and went at various times; some had matcha when they arrived and some had Moonlight White first. Sometimes the water was just under boiling and the tea brewed a rich amber color, and other steepings the water had cooled as the coals died down and the liquor moved to a more yellow tint. Cup after cup, we sipped in relative silence, the sun creeping through the door and casting rays over the *chaxi* on the center of the tatami mats. I passed the magazine around so we could read about the tea as we were drinking. Another Global Tea Hut member, Julia, said she hadn't tasted the tea yet so she could taste with us in the hut. Thanks Julia! I'm glad you had the willpower to wait to share with us!

As much as I enjoy drinking the tea every month, it always tastes better when I share it with others. For one, it allows for shared experience, and for that reason I put up a scroll in the *tokonoma* (alcove). It reads: "*Ichi-go Ichi-e* (One encounter, one chance)." The tea hut feels complete when the coals are glowing, the kettle humming and the aromas of tea and incense filling the room. With guests or even if it's just me (or sometimes my cat), the purpose of the space is fulfilled

when tea is flowing. Every time I sit in the hut for tea, a new experience and memory is created. I don't need to have the scroll hanging for this to be true it only serves as a reminder not to take the moment for granted.

Even though I have a tea hut, a space dedicated for tea, I still drink tea in my house quite often. So it is not necessary for tea enjoyment but a great bonus for sure. I will say that if you have the time, money and room to create a space for yourself that is purely for tea, you should do so. This will not only help to cultivate the spirit of Tea within you, but also help to focus your life by giving your other pursuits room to breathe. When the rest of your life feels more in control, your tea life will thrive, and things will come more naturally. I hope next time we have tea together, we can share this life and create new experiences!

"I will say that if you have the time, money and room to create a space for yourself that is purely for tea, you should do so. This will not only help to cultivate the spirit of Tea within you, but also help to focus your life by giving your other pursuits room to breathe."




一期一会

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these issues 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 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 Kevin Hartwell.

In 2008, in an old-growth forest on the remote mid-coast of British Columbia, Canada, I was working as a fish technician for a forestry company when I had an awakening to follow a path in the healing arts. My supervisor asked that I help hang "falling boundary" ribbons around 1000-year-old cedar trees. While standing next to one of the giant cedars, a sudden realization went straight to the core of my Being and I knew I needed to do two things with my life: *to help and to heal.*

A short while later, through a Native American sweat lodge ceremony, I was introduced to a lifelong friend, *reiki* teacher and shaman, along with a 180-degree change in employment—working with the handicapped. Next came my introduction to Lao Tzu's water tradition of energy arts and tea soon followed. However, I had no idea that people had been using tea to support meditation and other cultivation arts like Taiji and Qigong for thousands of years; I just knew I liked it.

Over several years I've learned Daoist meditation methods, which have been beneficial and very practical. But even so, I have never felt personally that I was able to embody the deeper aspects and techniques that are known to "thin the veil," as it were. Saying that, I've never had a live meditation teacher to transmit those teachings to me, which may not be essential, but is no doubt ideal. Furthermore, hearing/reading about people's experiences with different plant medicines was inspiring, but I lacked my own personal connection to any of them. At first, the very idea of a plant as a teacher just didn't feel right—until Tea, of course.

About a year ago, I came across our Global Tea Hut brother Po Rosenberg's interview in a Daoist magazine and what I read resonated very deeply. This summer, I found myself on the road to the Oregon coast to visit him. My experience there left me feeling like I had just drunk tea for the first time. It opened me up in so many ways, probably most profoundly to the fact that tea heals on all levels.

Whenever I drink tea on the go, at work or in the car or casually or while writing this, of course, it is good. It has a way of doing what it does for me in the moment. But I've noticed a stark contrast when I sit with the intention of connecting with Tea or make offerings to Tea Herself, and welcome Her healing wisdom into my mind, body, and spirit. She works much more deeply when I show up with the right intention. Getting up at 5am to meditate is not only easier with tea but I look forward to it! Using good clean tea in self-cultivation, especially while out in Nature, is my passion.

Another realization for me is how tea "drops you into the Dao" while drinking it. And afterwards, Her wisdom is still with you. Since drinking tea this way regularly, I've noticed a shift that I can confidently accredit to tea, causing an overall, consistent, lasting and fundamental change in my awareness and my feeling of being connected with everything.

茶人: ***Kevin Hartwell***

Tea truly does bring people together. I've recently began serving tea in my house weekly and found not only that I have met new friends, but that the connections I've made are more meaningful and with a substance and depth that I find rare in casual interactions. By sharing tea and teaching Qigong with my community here in Kimberley, BC and eventually doing so in natural settings as well, I will be assisting in bringing people closer to their nature. I hope to thereby fulfill my mission "to help and to heal."

I am so grateful to all my teachers and friends past, present and future, to the Global Tea Hut community for sharing so much tea wisdom and fellowship with me throughout my tea journey, and, of course, to Tea for all the changes She brought to my life. If you find yourself in British Columbia let's share some tea! I am always happy to meet tea lovers.

Inside the Hut

Because of the large number of tea sessions happening around the world, we are going to post about them on our website from now on and use this section to discuss news happening around the world. If you have any news, like a wedding, birth or tea happening, let us know and we'll write about it here. Our new app (coming soon) will connect you to each other and tea sessions around the world! Stay tea-tuned for community news.

The 2016 Light Meets Life Fundraiser is selling out fast, with one tea already gone. We have two amazing old-growth sheng teas this year, a Five Element shou, an amazing dian hong from Big Snow Mt. and another surprise as well!

We have a new page for Wu De's teaching events around the world. Many of you are always asking for updates, so we thought it was about time to share them: http://www.globalteahut.org/wudeteachings.

We have started broadcasting live videos at the beginning of every month on our Facebook page. This is a great way to connect with us, learn together and ask any and all questions. Check it out!

We are now offering free Light Meets Life cakes to authors whose submissions are accepted in Global Tea Hut. Let us know if you are interested in future topics or if you have a great idea for a tea-related article and we'd be happy to take a look at your work.

Don't forget that we have a tremendous amount of supplementary material online: articles in Further Readings, blog posts from the community, and past issues of this magazine as well as a ton of videos on many subjects that we have covered over the years of sharing tea wisdom.

Wu De will be in Bali in late January with a stop in New Zealand to serve tea at the Wanderlust Festival. Then Wu De and Sam will be traveling in New Zealand and Australia some time in March. Check the website for details.

We have a goal to reach two thousand members. We have 10,000 Instagram followers and 5,000 Facebook likes, so it is possible. The world needs a free tea center for education: classes and courses taught in the spirit of tea, hospitality, love and self-cultivation. We envision a future in which every December enevelope comes with a catalogue of the next year's courses on a variety of tea topics...

December Affirmation

I am cheerful.

The holidays are a chance to celebrate all my friends and loved ones, even when challenged. (Especially then!) Can I help to bring heartfelt cheer, celebration and love to any gathering? Can I show up more, rather than less, when challenged?

Center News

Before you visit, check out the Center's website (www.teasagehut.org) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. Wu will be traveling a lot in 2017, so check his schedule on the site if you are interested in seeing him while you are here at the Center.

We are looking for help with farming, photography, video and web design. If any of you have experience in these things and are interested in staying at the Center to learn Cha Dao, with free room and board, contact us!

It is now winter time, which means Fridays are hot spring days at the Center. Every Friday morning, we steep some shou tea and head to the nearby hot springs for a winter tradition of a few hours of soaking. (If you were looking for an excuse to visit in the winter, you got it!)

We are thinking of hosting some ten-day tea courses at the Center in 2017. Let us know if you are interested in attending.

www.globalteahut.org

The friendliest Tea magazine in the world! Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all, we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.

GLOBAL TEA HUT

Tea & Tao Magazine