

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

August 2017

EVENING SKY

紫茶
德宏

PURPLE TEA
DEHONG





EVENING SKY

Purple red tea from Dehong, which we call “Evening Sky,” is one of our all-time favorite teas. As we sip these sweet, punchy, ancient tree leaves, we can explore what purple tea really is, travel through Dehong itself and then discuss kettles and the new app, getting lost in the sky with each purple sip.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

FEATURES

15 PURPLE BUD TEA

By Snow Yang

21 A TOUR OF DEHONG

By Luo Yingyin

37 EXPANSION PACK IV

Wild Bud Evening Sky

39 UNDERSTANDING OLD-GROWTH PUERH

By Wu De

47 GLOBAL TEA HUT APP

Editorial

夜空紫

15



39



03



TRADITIONS

03 TEA OF THE MONTH

“Evening Sky,” 2017 Purple Red Tea
Dehong, Yunnan, China

51 TEAWARE ARTISANS

“The Making of a Kettle”
By Petr Novak

57 TEAWAYFARER

Petr Novak, Czech Republic

21



夜空紫茶



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From the Editor

In August, we turn past the zenith into the second half of the year. It is still very hot in Taiwan, so we continue to focus on green and white teas, lightly-oxidized oolong (when we can find organic), along with lots of young sheng puerh. Of course, red tea is good any time of the year. This is a great time to taste all the wonderful teas being produced this year, including our Light Meet Life fundraiser teas. We have a great sheng puerh and some stellar dian hong cakes as well. It is still too hot for outdoor tea sessions most days, but early morning and late afternoon are good times for a walk or for farm work. This is a pleasant time to be in Taiwan, as everyone is more laid back in the summer. Of course, the Center continues to thrive, and I continue to travel in the name of Cha Dao.

The new ten-day course schedule at the Center is great, allowing a bit more structure to manage the growing workflow here. We will continue to improve the content of these courses. Eventually, we will even theme some of them, but for the remainder of this year, all the ten-day courses are “Introduction to Cha Dao.” In almost every course, we have arranged for participants to harvest and process tea, depending on the availability of leaves. It is our aim to provide the lessons and facilities so that all participants who come here for ten days will leave with a foothold in a tea practice, understanding the basics of tea ceremony, tea and tea preparation in ways that allow them to head back home and continue the practice—even serving their friends and family.

We have a truly beautiful Light Meets Life fundraiser this year, including some amazing tea and teaware. We have six cakes this year: a gorgeous sheng, Moonlight White, three dian hong cakes and a beautiful, intentionally produced old-growth shou cake that everyone is sure to love. So many of you continue to email us about getting some gongfu teaware, especially authentic *zisha* clay, which is challenging these days. As a result, we have made three teapots, a kettle and stove set (for gongfu) and a waste-water container (*jian shui*, 建水)—all from Yixing. May these create abundance for all of us to have a future, permanent Center, and may they improve the tea you drink and the tea you share.

After two months or so of using the app, we would love to have your feedback! We hope that more sessions are happening around the world as a result, not to mention all the communication and learning that this app can facilitate. Technology is great when it brings people together and helps us to learn and grow together. Email us if there are features that need to be added or fixed. We hope to improve and evolve the app over time so that it suits the needs of this community!

Also, our photo contest will be closing on the fifteenth of this month. If you still haven't submitted your photo, please be sure to do so. There are some amazing prizes this year, including tea, tea art and great teaware.

Remind your friends as well, because the photo contest is open to non-members. Remember though, there is only one entry per person. We will judge the winners in September and announce them at that time.

This month, we turn our attention to one of my favorite places in the world: Dehong. This remote and autonomous prefecture of Yunnan Province is nestled right up against the border of Myanmar. Due to its remoteness, it has changed much less than other parts of Yunnan, and you can still encounter living culture, pristine Nature and unique tea culture. The tea there is often cleaner, with less influence from mainstream, industrial agriculture.

Amongst the teas of Dehong, there is a unique wild mutation that has purple buds. This purple tea is very special, tasting like no other tea in the world. It can be made into sheng puerh (like Rainforest, which some of you will remember), but is especially delicious as a red tea like our Tea of the Month, Evening Sky. This is one of our all-time favorite teas here at the Hut, and we are so happy to share it with you this year! It affords us the opportunity to talk about mutation, botany and purple-bud tea in greater depth and learn about Dehong as we sip deeply from one of the most vibrant and delicious teas on earth.

We also have a great article on the creation of kettles by our very own Petr Novak and an article on the problems with “old-growth” tea in the puerh market. We also have an important article about the app, which we know so many of you are enjoying. This is a full and rich issue, with lots of exciting content and one of our favorite teas ever!



—Further Readings—

This month, we recommend taking the time to read through the March 2016 issue of Global Tea Hut. It is all about red tea in general. You may also want to read about kettles, stoves and fire in the August 2015 issue. Both are in the “Past Issues” part of the website.

TEA OF THE MONTH

 ver the course of this issue, we are going to explore a very rare kind of dian hong tea made from wild, purple-bud trees. This opens the door to reviewing topics like dian hong tea, mutation and seed propagation in tea botany and then to explore the unique particulars of this amazing purple tea as a genre and our Tea of the Month specifically, including its geography and terroir. Such rare gifts of Nature are the best of what Tea offers us, especially when they are grounded in rich and biodiverse environments, bringing Nature to society—the mountain to our bowls!

Tea is a sexual plant, which means that it is cross-pollinated. A tremendous amount of natural energy goes into the creation of a tea seed, including insects, forest, sun and sky. And thus, each seed carries great energy within it. No two tea seeds are alike. They will each produce a completely unique tea tree, which is why tea has done so well traveling to different climates. If you plant a thousand seeds, the chances that one of them will survive are high. Unfortunately, very little tea in the world is seed-propagated. The reason, of course, is the commoditization of tea. Sadly, tea faces many of the problems that haunt all agricultural products: Most tea plantations use cuttings from a tree, planted to produce another. This is a clipped branch planted in the ground; they are in essence clones. Farmers do this to achieve a uniformity of flavor, which they think

we tea lovers want. Actually, tasting the variations in the weather and seed-propagated trees is a joy, bringing the climate of a place, its nature and spirit, to our cups. Also, with hundreds or even thousands of different trees, all with different needs, the farmer would potentially have a lot more work tending them, so clones make farming easier, increasing efficiency and profit and killing spirit to do so.

Like all sexual plants, *Camellia sinensis* undergoes an alteration of generations. In tea trees, what botanists call “sporophytes,” which are the spore-producing generation of a plant, have two matching chromosome sets. This is the dominant stage in the life cycle of a tea tree, while the production of what are called “gametophytes,” which are the male and female cells, is the minor stage. Through cell division (called “meiosis”), the sporophyte creates a gametophyte, which is then fused through cross-pollination with that of another plant, through either insects (like bees) or pollen spread by the wind. After the gametophytes are fused, a zygote is formed with chromosomes from both the male and female plants. Then, through “mitosis,” which is also a kind of cell division, this new plant will grow to maturity. This is how tea is naturally propagated in scientific terms.

It took millennia for trees to develop sexual cross-fertilization. It is also tremendously difficult for such trees to fertilize one another, more often

requiring the assistance of other species. As a result, plants have developed magnificent ways of fertilizing each other, enticing insects to pollinate them or carried by the wind. There is a reason for all this. Carl Sagan said that the evolution from asexual to sexual reproduction on this planet was as significant as the beginning of life itself, as it allows for all the creative power in Nature to assert itself in a myriad of forms.

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

There are essentially two or three main varieties of tea trees: “Large-leaf trees,” which are the original, oldest tea trees (which we’re drinking this month). They usually have a single, thick trunk, can grow very tall and have roots that grow downwards and much deeper into the earth.



Evening Sky



Dehong, Yunnan, China



2017 Purple Red Tea



De'ang Chinese



~1,800 Meters



As tea moved north, whether naturally or carried by man, it evolved into “small-leaf trees,” which are more bush-like. They have many trunks and roots that grow outwards. In fact, the leaves got smaller and smaller as tea moved north—until you get to Japan where the leaves are so small they look like needles after they’re rolled! There are then “medium-leaf” trees, like Qi-men gongfu red tea, Red Sun Rising or Liu Bao tea. You cannot determine the kind of tree by examining any one leaf, as large-leaf tea trees have small buds and small-leaf trees also have larger leaves once they grow out. You must look at the overall tree—at the largest leaves once they are fully grown. Mature leaves from large-leaf tea trees are much, much larger than leaves from small-leaf trees.

Having reviewed the three main kinds of tea trees, we can now discuss the difference between seed-propagated and cloned tea, which is obvious in several ways. Large-leaf tea trees can live thousands of years. The oldest one we’ve dated is 3,500 years old! It is about six people around. There are probably older trees out there, or at least there were in the past. There is also a 2,700-year-old tree in Ai Lao. Small-leaf tea trees can live hundreds of years, and some are many centuries old, like the old-growth trees on Phoenix Mountain, which are used to make *Dancong* oolong. Here’s the punch line: The clones on plantations typically live only thirty to fifty years.

A few farmers have told us that trees aren’t living as long anymore, sometimes as few as fifteen to twenty years. This is because modern farming practices are based on increasing yield at any cost to the environment, so farmers nowadays will rip out clones as soon as their harvest decreases even slightly. This isn’t long, as they are fertilized to create more leaves and then are over-harvested. This unnatural, quickened production of tea with agrochemicals eventually wears down the soil as well.

Beyond just the age of the trees, there are several species of birds that love to eat tea seeds. They are rich and oily and full of nutrients. Farmers make cooking oil out of them. It’s delicious. More than one farmer has told us that after the second generation of cloning, the birds will no longer eat the tea seeds.

Nature has been creating life for millennia, so it is very unhealthy for us to assume that we can improve or alter Her designs. Our attempts to interfere with Nature rarely take into account all the biodiversity and the infinite, immeasurable connections there are between species. We take control of an environment and monocrop it, controlling a few factors in a huge web of symmetry. This may be smart, but it isn’t wise. As we’ve done this to larger and more diverse areas, our meddling has begun to have a global impact, changing the Environment (capital “E”) rather than just the places where we farm.

野生樹漂流天空

從岩石到天堂





🍵 This is the wild, all-bud version of Evening Sky, from older trees deeper in the forests of Dehong. This tea is from higher in the mountains, coming from an altitude of more than two thousand meters above the sea. The buds are thicker, larger and more juicy. We will be offering this tea as an Expansion Pack and introducing it later on in this issue (see pp. 37-38). These trees are protected by the De'ang, and honored as sacred. The farmer has to climb the rocks to reach these wild trees. When you drink this tea, you will feel the difference in altitude—a relationship to the sky that is stronger than the connection to the forest you will feel in our Tea of the Month, which is from other wild gardens lower down the mountains. Our Tea of the Month comes from trees that are between the ages of forty and two hundred (only a few trees are two hundred, so most of the tea is made from younger trees). These wild trees, on the other hand, can be up to eight hundred years old, though most are younger than that. The tree shown here is around one to two hundred years old. It has grown tall and is very healthy. Hopefully, it will live much longer!

In fact, none of our creations ever come close to the power or beauty of Nature, especially since we too are one of her greater masterpieces—so all that we create also owes homage to Mother Earth, ultimately. Allowing her creative license is an important aspect of the diversity of life that sustains this planet, and any given environment. When tea is natural and seed-propagated, every single tree is unique. Mutations arise. They each have a place and a hue, and in that way She can create more and varied medicine for us. It is presumptuous to assume that all the variety in tea is human-made, and has to do exclusively with processing, as some authors would suggest. A tremendous amount of variety is natural born, and defies our limited, mind-made categories of what tea genres are.

Though we call such tea varieties “mutations,” this should be understood in a way that is all aglow with positivity, as such changes in the genetics of trees are in response to their environment. This means that a harmony with the environment created these changes over time. The mutations of tea trees could be thought of as the environment changing the tea as much as the tea changing *within* an environment. The two go together. It is only the human mind that separates the tree from its environment as a distinct entity. In truth, a tree *is* its environment: The soil, climate and biodiversity all flow through it, as its energy flows through other organisms in the form of food, water and even oxygen, which it creates in photosynthesis. When the environment is pristine and rich, filled with

the diversity of insects, birds, lizards, snakes and a myriad of other species, including microorganisms, the influence of all these species will be within the tea leaves, and also be a part of the subtle, slow evolutionary pressure that, over long spans of time, results in the survival of new mutations that become varieties, which in turn can “speciate” and become an entirely new species of *Camellia*. One example of a way in which we can follow the web of interconnectedness in a rich, biodiverse ecology is to see that the insects we humans ordinarily fight to keep out of our agricultural environments are also an essential part of a food chain, and that the waste/manure of the insects, as well as the birds, snakes, lizards and other organisms that eat insects, all help fertilize the soil and the tea trees.

Purple Tea

Though it is sometimes referred to as “purple tea,” this is actually *not* a genre of tea but rather a *kind of tree* (several varieties, actually), which can be found within most genres of tea. Remember that all genres of tea are a complicated blend of varieties and processing techniques. When we say that a tea is a purple tea, we mean that a variety of tea has a very unique mutation, where its buds are purple to maroon in color. In most varieties of purple tea, the purple buds slowly turn green as they open into mature leaves, changing from inside to out. This lends the tree a beautiful glow, as the buds are all purple and many of the smaller leaves around them are ringed with purple. However, the leaves do stay a dark purplish hue in some varieties.

Purple tea is found in many tea-growing regions, especially where natural seed-propagation has thrived (or once thrived) for centuries, allowing for natural variation in variety. There are examples in green tea, like “Purple Bamboo Shoot (*Zi Sun*, 紫筍)” from Zhejiang Province, which is always purplish, and varieties of oolong that occasionally have purple buds, like “Four Seasons of Spring (*Si Ji Chun*, 四季春)” in Taiwan and the Wuyi Cliff tea variety called “Iron Arhat (*Tie Luo Han*, 鐵羅漢).” As you can see, purple tea is found in most genres of tea, even white tea, which many of you know, having drunk our purple-bud “Moonlight White (*Yue Guang Bai*, 月光白)” from Jinggu in Yunnan.

In Yunnan, there are three main kinds of purple tea: The oldest, pure variety of “Wild Purple (*Ye Sheng Zi*, 野生紫),” which is our Tea of the Month (*Camellia sinensis* var. *Assamica Dehongensis*). It comes from Dehong. We will discuss this kind more in our discussion of this month’s tea. The second is called simply “Purple Bud (*Zi Ya*, 紫芽).” This natural mutation is found all throughout Yunnan in any species or variety that is seed-propagated, and therefore allowed to mutate. There are many kinds of such purple-bud tea, including Moonlight White. The last kind of purple tea found in Yunnan is a human-made cultivar called “Purple Beauty (*Zi Juan*, 紫娟).” Some scholars suggest it was made by

crossing purple-hued varieties of Iron Arhat from Wuyi with *Assamica* from Yunnan, while others claim it to be a native cultivar. This rare cultivar produces a very unique purple liquor of which we have yet to find an organic, or delicious, example. More often, it is a passing curiosity at tea tables in tea shops trying to expose the customer to many kinds of tea.

Purple tea is purple because the trees have produced anthocyanins, which are water-soluble pigments that can be deep purple, maroon, red, black or blue, depending on the pH. Grapes, black rice, blueberries and raspberries are all examples of foods with anthocyanins. Maple leaves, and actually some of the colors found in autumn leaves, are also derived from these pigments. These pigments are why the liquor of purple tea can also be a different color. Anthocyanins are passed on genetically or form as a result of exposure to high amounts of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. When tea grows in places with more drastic, direct exposure to sunlight, it can evolve to create these pigments to protect itself. Over time, this propensity can then be passed on to future generations of the tea.

Anthocyanins have been found to be beneficial to one’s health, especially in preventing heart disease. This antioxidant may be anti-cancerous along with helping to improve one’s heart function. Of course, more research into the health benefits of anthocyanins will help verify this. In general, it is better to view tea as a spiritual elixir, promoting overall well-being, relaxation and meditation, rather than as a treatment for a particular ailment.

茶 *This is also the wild, all-bud version of Evening Sky, which is our Expansion Pack this month. These huge whitish buds of “Wild Purple” tea will slowly change to vibrant yellowish-green and then dark green as they mature into fully grown leaves. They are rich in sweet flavor and dark breadth that shines. Tea leaves do not arise ex nihilo, or from nothing; they are a product of their environment. The tree absorbs minerals from the earth, rain water, humidity and other nutrients to take in the environment and create leaves from within. This outward growing force is therefore informed by the input of the tree. Tea grown in plantations, taking in fertilizer and irrigated water will never be able to produce as robust, powerful or magnificent of leaves as natural, forest-grown leaves like this do. Hopefully, you can feel this radiance even in the picture! The buds are strong and rise forcefully, as the environment that creates them is vibrant and extremely fertile. They are full of an immense Qi that must be tried.*

全世界在一個茶葉

五行製作茶

茶道



THE MAKING OF RED TEA

The main feature that distinguishes red tea is a very heavy withering, causing as much oxidation as possible. This heavy oxidation is achieved during the processing/drying stages of the leaf. Oxidation is an enzymatic process: basically, cellular breakdown due to, of course, the exposure to oxygen, like when a banana or apple turns brown on the counter. Oxidation can be spontaneous or controlled and can have a positive or negative influence on the quality of a tea. The change in the leaves after harvest is spontaneous oxidation. Controlled oxidation happens during the withering, rolling and piling phases. Proper oxidation in tea production requires an abundance of moist, oxygen-rich air. For red tea production, oxidation rooms (or long vats with fans and/or heaters) must provide ample humidified air to promote heavy oxidation. The polyphenols in the leaf (tea catechins) bond to oxygen molecules during the early stages of oxidation.

These days, the withering of red tea most often takes place in long troughs that have fans that blow warm humid air over the leaves. However, in Yunnan, farms are often still very simple and lack machinery, so the tea is often just left on the ground in a pile to wither. If a farmer is going to wither without machinery, it is ideal to pile

the tea on round bamboo mats held up on racks, as this will allow more air flow from underneath.

There are many chemical reactions that comprise oxidation. The oxygenation of polyphenols starts a series of chemical reactions that change the flavor of the leaf more towards red tea. Tea expert and Global Tea Hut member Robert Heiss expresses these changes better than us: “The enzymes polyphenol oxidase and peroxidase act on other polyphenols to produce theaflavins. These red-orange compounds then react with more polyphenols to produce thearubigins, the chemicals responsible for changing the leaf’s color from green to golden, coppery, or chocolate brown. The thearubigins, meanwhile, are also busy reacting with some of the amino acids and sugars in the leaf, creating the highly polymerized substances that develop into the various and distinctive flavor components that we expect in red tea. In general, theaflavins contribute to the brisk and bright taste of red tea, while the thearubigins are what provide strength (depth or body) and color. If the temperature of the leaf is allowed to rise too high, the controlled oxidation will rage out of control; and if it falls too low, oxidation will cease.” Usually, the pile of withering tea is stirred to control the temperature and oxidation degree.

The oxidation of the tea then continues into the next stage of rolling. Rolling can be done by machine or, more rarely, by hand. This breaks the cell walls down and releases the essential oils that make red tea darker, allowing oxygen to interact with these otherwise trapped chemical components. Rolling also shapes the tea, so the method of rolling will determine the final shape of the tea. For most red teas, this is done for up to ninety minutes, but experts will of course judge by looking at and smelling the leaves.

Optionally, red tea is then piled again after rolling to increase oxidation, usually on round bamboo mats, to a thickness of twenty centimeters or so. This additional oxidation results in further changes in the tea’s flavor, aroma, color and impact on Qi when drunk.

Finally, red tea is dried. Most red teas are baked dry in ovens. However, dian hong is more often sun-dried like puerh. The baking/sun-drying arrests the oxidation and finishes the tea (oxidation actually does not stop completely, but slows to a pouring-honey-slow crawl). Some areas will also include sorting in various phases of the processing, but this usually occurs after the tea is dried to remove mis-processed or broken leaves before final packaging. Dian hong is rarely sorted.



尋找紅色精髓

手工紅寶石



Dian Hong

“Dian (滇)” is an aboriginal word for “Yunnan” and “hong (紅)” is, of course, red, so this term applies to any red tea produced in Yunnan. It may surprise you that Yunnan produces red tea, since it is famous for puerh tea. Throughout the twentieth century, Yunnan produced much more red tea than puerh, until the boom in the early 2000s. In the late nineties, there were hardly any puerh shops in Kunming, and the locals drank much more red and green tea. Now, of course, there are puerh shops everywhere, including the airport.

Any tea can be processed like a red tea, and while the process may seem complicated, it is actually one of the simplest kinds of tea to make: *pluck and oxidize heavily*. Since dian hong starts out as puerh raw material (*maocha*, 毛茶), its quality is determined in much the same way, which means that the terroir and the age of the trees play a huge role in evaluating dian hong. Some of you will remember our discussions of trees and gardens in Yunnan, in which we said that like most things in the tea world, there are no standard ways of discussing tree ages or garden types (and like most things tea, the trends that do exist are often misleading and/or incorrect).

Understanding the age of the tree, the mountain the tea came from and

the kind of garden are essential in puerh tea and, by extension, dian hong. Most teas have a ratio between the terroir/trees/raw material and the processing skills that create the final quality. This ratio is different in each genre. In oolong, for example, quality is half and half. But in puerh and dian hong, as much as ninety percent of the quality of any tea is in the raw material—the terroir. We call trees above one hundred years “old-growth” and trees around one thousand years “ancient.” We then divide gardens into the three main categories of “plantation,” which are industrially grown, rarely sustainable rows of cuttings; “eco-arboreal,” which are semi-wild, seed-propagated gardens on the edges of villages between the forest and homestead; and “forest gardens,” which can be wild or human-made, but are in the jungle proper with all its biodiversity and life. While there has been a lot of plantation red tea produced in Yunnan for centuries, old-growth dian hong are the best examples of living dian hong.

Dian hong is distinct from other kinds of red tea in the same ways as puerh. Puerh *maocha* is unique because the firing (*sha qing*, 杀青) is done at a lower temperature for a shorter duration so that the heat-resistant spore colonies essential in the post-production fermentation will survive. The tea

is then sun-dried so that the light and heat will reactivate the microbes and fermentation will begin. Dian hong has no firing stage and no de-enzyming, so the microbe-dense leaves, which are covered in hundreds of species of molds and bacteria before harvest, are even more active. Like puerh, dian hong is sun-dried, which gives the tea a unique flavor and leaves the microbes active.

Dian hong is most often malty and rich, brisk and energetic. The color of the leaves ranges from dark bluish-black to bright gold, and the tea can be made of buds or sets of leaves and buds. The liquor often brews a dark or bright red and can be cloudy due to a lack of production skill and quality control in Yunnanese tea production, especially if the tea is made simply in the village. But no one drinks a dian hong looking for refinement; if you are seeking that in a red tea, drink a “gongfu red tea (功夫紅茶)” from Anhui or Fujian, like June’s Tea of the Month, Red Sun Rising. Dian hong is strong and vibrant. It moves the Qi—briskly and vibrantly.

茶 These “Purple Buds” won’t change to green. These leaves are included in our Tea of the Month.

陰 Dian Hong & Sheng Puerh 陽

The best qualities dian hong has to offer are in many respects similar to puerh: old trees and deep Qi with a strength due to the heavy oxidation, which releases the deep energy of a dian hong in the same way aging puerh tea does—only aged puerh is yin and red tea processing results in yang tea. You could think of dian hong as the counterpart to aged puerh. Both release more of the deeper, dark essence of the tough, large leaves of Yunnanese species, but dian hong does so through oxidation during processing, making it vibrant and young, while the slow and grace-

ful aging of sheng puerh releases the same depths more softly and gently. Energetically, this is also true: dian hong is vital and strong, and aged sheng puerh is deep, soft and soothing in a feminine way.

This is a vital and deep way of thinking of the relationship between fermentation and oxidation, or dian hong and aged sheng puerh. Oxidation is an enzymatic process, during which oxygen is absorbed and causes changes to the leaves. Fermentation is anaerobic, microbial activity involving one or more types of bacteria, molds and/or yeasts. Usually, this re-

sults in alcohol, but not in tea production. Aged sheng has also undergone enzymatic oxidation, but very slowly over time. This, along with fermentation, results in a very yin tea. Dian hong red tea processing, on the other hand, has only undergone oxidation, resulting in a greater, heavier cellular breakdown forcibly and while the tea is young. Both result in dark liquors, one black and one red, but aged sheng is soft and billowy, deep and quiet as a mountain cave, while dian hong is invigorating, like a run through the park on the first afternoon that really feels like summer.



Evening Sky

This month, our tea comes from the Mangshi Township in the Dehong Prefecture of Yunnan, a province in southwest China, which is, as we have discussed, the birthplace of all tea. Dehong is one of eight autonomous prefectures in Yunnan, bordering Myanmar to the west. The Dai and Jingpo tribes abound throughout the area.

Evening Sky is made from the “Wild Purple (*Ye Sheng Zi*, 野生紫)” varietal, also known as *Camellia sinensis* var. *Assamica Dehongensis*. Its potency and incredible Qi arise from its unadulterated nature. It is naturally bug repellent, and grows wild in the forests of Yunnan at an altitude of 1,600–2,200 meters. Some of the trees are old-growth, ranging in the hundreds of years old. This tea comes from natural, seed-propagated and wild gardens. Our Tea of the Month comes from trees that are between the ages of forty and two hundred. Only a few trees are two hundred, so most of the tea is made from younger trees. (*One of the oldest trees is shown on the back cover.*) The *maocha* is often very bitter when it is processed as sheng puerh (and drunk fresh/young), but sweet and fruity as red tea. This tea also ages faster than ordinary Assamica, developing aged subtlety and complexity faster than a lot of sheng puerh or other dian hong teas. (We will be offering a wild, all-bud version from deeper in the forest as an Expansion Pack. Check pages 37-38 or the website for availability!)

That it predates the varietal of *Camellia* that we normally assume to be “tea” (*Camellia sinensis*) raises interesting questions about what it even means to say that a leaf is “tea.” The categories we use to separate these varietals are, of course, arbitrary. This lineage of trees is unique enough that it is considered by biologists to be a separate varietal, but not a unique species, as it can still reproduce/cross-pollinate with other *Camellia sinensis*.

Normally, teas such as this one are processed like puerh tea. This purple-bud varietal of puerh is found throughout Yunnan and was even mentioned in Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra*, the oldest surviving book on tea. It took a gifted tongue to realize that the tea from this garden would rather be red tea. (We have drunk its puerh version, so we know from firsthand experience.) You won’t need to trust us, however, for as soon as you open your tin and smell this remarkable tea, you’ll wonder how it ever could be processed any other way.

This unique “Purple Bud,” old-growth, wild red tea is out-of-this-world flavorful. It erupts in a bouquet of fruity, flowery notes that expand seemingly endlessly. There are peachy-fruity nuts, berries and flowers in the bouquet. The complexity of this tea is astounding. You haven’t ever had anything quite like it. The Qi is fanciful and uplifting, which is rare for a red tea, but this tea breaks all the molds. You can brew it almost any way, and you’ll find it responds well. We drink it in bowls or steep it in a sidehandle pot. It is very patient, especially for a red tea. Therefore, be sure to give yourself a whole morning to enjoy it. Like most great teas, the glorious fragrance of this tea is so much better shared with a friend or loved one.



Leaves in a bowl

Sidehandle

Water: spring water or best bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: hotter, fish-eye, roughly 90–95 °C

Brewing Methods: leaves in a bowl or sidehandle (sidehandle is better)

Steeping: longer, flash, then growing

(red tea is nice with fewer leaves in a larger pot)

Patience: twenty steepings

茶 Leave the lid off of the pot when the leaves aren't steeping if your pot is large with fewer leaves.

This is so the leaves don't steam inside, changing the flavor.

Brewing Tips

This glorious dian hong is very forgiving—easy to brew, in other words. You can't really go wrong with this kind of tea. It can be brewed leaves in a bowl or steeped Western style or in a sidehandle pot. We would recommend using a sidehandle and steeping this tea into bowls. You can actually also brew this tea gongfu if you want, though we very rarely do so.

We have found that the flowery, peachy fragrance is enhanced by using fewer leaves in a large pot, with longer steepings that grow slowly over the session. Try lightly covering the bottom of a larger pot like autumn leaves—covering the bottom, but you can still see it. Then steep the tea longer, from one minute to several as the session progresses. Don't give up on this tea when it moves from red liquor to golden, as there are some deep, jungly, mineral surprises in these later steepings—not to mention a nice fragrance and Qi. We always steep this tea until it is water. The light fragrances of the earth, rocks and altitude of this healthy tea really shine in these later steepings. Since we will be using

fewer leaves in a larger pot, with room for the leaves to expand and steep for a longer period, it is important to remove the lid between steepings. This is nice with green and red teas when you will be sipping for longer, your pot is large and leaf ration less. If you don't remove the lid between pours, the leaves will steam inside. This long steaming will reduce the patience of the tea. Worse, it will discourage the fruity, flowery fragrance of this tea. Also, the tea will begin to taste of boiled tea over the course of the session, losing the natural movement from purplish-red to golden liquor. A similar degradation occurs with very fresh, young sheng puerh or other green or white teas when using a large sidehandle pot. You can also apply this to brewing such teas gongfu, though it is not always necessary since the steepings are quicker, the pot smaller and the cups drunk up faster, reducing the time between pours (and therefore, decreasing the time the leaves are steaming in the pot). In this way, this month's tea will stay sweet for many steepings.



PURPLE BUD

TEA

紫芽茶



I was born in Yunnan, and my destiny first became intertwined with tea more than ten years ago, when I began working in tea-related media. Since then, my love for tea has flourished—especially for the puerh teas of my home province. My work often leads me to visit many of Yunnan’s tea mountains, where I travel around, researching tea, harvesting tea, making tea and listening to the stories of the old tea farmers.

茶人: Snow Yang 楊雪花

Purple Tea: “The Finest of Teas”

Puerh tea is a well-known variety that is unique to China’s Yunnan Province, and is made from the leaves of Yunnan tea tree varieties. Most trees used for puerh have green leaves and buds, but there is another, rarer type: “Purple Bud,” or “Zi Ya (紫芽)” tea. In his famous *Tea Sutra*, the *Cha Jing* (茶經), the tea sage Lu Yu (陸羽) sings its praises: “Purple tea is the finest of teas.” The “purple tea” that he refers to here is Purple Bud tea from Yunnan.

While there are other types of Purple Bud tea that are not Yunnanese puerh, we will focus on the Yunnanese varieties. The purple buds and leaves in these varieties arise due to natural genetic variation when old-wood tea trees are exposed to certain environmental factors in certain areas. (There’s also another phenomenon whereby a tea tree’s leaves can briefly turn purple simply from exposure to temporary changes in weather and climate, but that’s not what we’re referring to here.) In other words, the leaves of a tree may change briefly due to exposure to direct sunlight. To protect itself from ultraviolet (UV) radiation, the tree can develop a temporary purplish-maroon hue in some of the leaves. If this continues to occur over time, generations of this tree will evolve towards more and more purplish buds through sexual cross-pollination and the resulting mutation. Eventually, the offspring of such tea will have the potential to generate purple leaves, even if they have migrated to an area that has less UV exposure. As a result, we sometimes find wild Purple Bud trees deep in the forest. (The varietal of wild Purple Bud from Dehong is called “Wild Purple.”)

In fact, ten or so years ago, there was no clear concept of “Purple Bud” tea among Yunnan puerh. Because of its unusual flavor and appearance, tea merchants generally overlooked it, while tea farmers tried to avoid harvesting purple buds along with the green ones, concerned that they would influence the manufacturing process and the uniform color of the finished tea. Sometimes, if a family of tea farmers had harvested quite a lot of purple buds and couldn’t bear to waste them, they would tell the merchants buying the tea that the color was a result of fermentation from accidentally sealing the tea up for too long, rather than disclosing the real reason: the leaves were simply a different color to begin with.

Ancient trees that grew a particularly large amount of purple buds would be lucky to escape the fate of being chopped down by the tea farmers. This reminds me of the parable of the Daoist sage Chuang Tzu, who said that the straight tree is chopped down and made into furniture, while the crooked tree is left to grow old and strong. He was advising a kind of graceful, sacred uselessness/withdrawal from the world. In this case, Purple Bud tea escaped the market and its corruption. If it had been ill-starred though, the farmers would have cut these trees down and replaced them with more profitable varieties. Luckily, after a small number of Chajin noticed this variety of tea and began to point out its presence in classics such as the *Cha Jing*, everyone began rushing to protect it, and this variety with its unusual appearance and flavor was once again valued and preserved in puerh tea circles.





Zi Ya & Zi Juan: Two Different Teas

Most wild Purple Bud tea trees grow in the primeval forests of Yunnan's mountains. Early on, scientists from the Yunnan Tea Research Institute (雲南茶科所) noticed tea trees with quite purple leaves and shoots among the community of tea plants at the Nannuo Mountain (南糯山) Tea Plantation, but at the time, they didn't intentionally propagate them. According to one version of the story, in 1985, researchers from the Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences Tea Research Institute (雲南省農業科學院茶業研究所) noticed a single, unique tea tree growing among 600,000 others in a large-leaf plantation in Yunnan. The buds, leaves and stems of this tree were completely purple. Starting in 1986, experts selectively bred offspring taken from this plant for several generations, thus cultivating a new, reliably occur-

ring variety of tea tree. Because of its purple leaves, buds and stems, it was named "Purple Beauty," or "*Zi Juan* (紫娟)." (There are other scholars who suggest that *Zi Juan* was grafted by crossing a varietal from Wuyi, in Fujian, with local cultivars.)

For a long time, there wasn't a clear definition of Purple Bud tea. It wasn't until after the discovery of Purple Beauty tea that Purple Bud tea was gradually recognized for its unique qualities, and began to gain favor among tea drinkers. From around the year 2000, Purple Bud tea began to be produced as a tea in its own right throughout many parts of Yunnan. In the spring of this year, I accompanied Taiwanese tea culture expert Master Tsai Yizhe (蔡奕哲) to explore the ecology and the current circumstances of Purple Bud tea in the Lincang (臨滄) tea region. When we interviewed the local tea farmers, they

divulged that *Zi Ya* tea is now quite well-received, and is no longer overlooked by tea merchants or passed off as "over-fermented" leaves. Far from it, as of 2008, Purple Bud tea now fetches more than twice the price of ordinary green sheng puerh tea produced in the same place.

Because it is produced in such small volumes, the price of *Zi Ya* tea is practically rising by the day. Together with the tea merchants enthusiastic promotion, this has resulted in quite a high demand for *Zi Ya* tea. It's common for tea drinkers who don't yet have a deep knowledge of puerh to discuss *Zi Ya* and *Zi Juan* tea as if they were the same thing. This is a point that I feel merits some special clarification.

Put simply, the main difference between *Zi Ya* and *Zi Juan* tea trees is that the ancient tea trees used for *Zi Ya* (Purple Bud) tea arose as a



“Put simply, the main difference between *Zi Ya* and *Zi Juan* tea trees is that the ancient tea trees used for *Zi Ya* (Purple Bud) tea arose as a natural genetic mutation, almost as if the seasonal high temperatures and the ultraviolet rays from the strong sunshine encouraged the trees to grow purple buds, like these shown here.”

natural genetic mutation; almost as if the seasonal high temperatures and the ultraviolet rays from the strong sunshine encouraged the trees to grow purple buds, like these shown here. *Zi Juan* (Purple Beauty) tea, on the other hand, was cultivated through careful breeding, selecting only the chosen seedlings for grafting, and increasing the sunlight and temperature until the result was a whole plantation of trees that were entirely purple, from bud to leaf to stem. By contrast, *Zi Ya* (Purple Bud) tea is much scarcer—in a whole forest of ancient tea trees, there will only be a few with any purple buds, and even those trees tend to only have a few shoots that are purple, perhaps as few as three, and likely not more than twenty or so. When these shoots do appear, only the bud itself and two or three new leaves nearest the tip turn purple, so they really are very rare.

As for which tea region in Yunnan grows the most Purple Bud tea, after many enquiries, I’ve found it very difficult to obtain any statistics. The tea farmers don’t seem to have a clear idea, and at present, there is no governing body to collect concrete numbers.

To get a comprehensive overview, I collected a wide selection of *Zi Ya* and *Zi Juan* teas from different regions to taste and compare. The dry leaves of *Zi Juan* are a glossy purple-black, and the tea cakes are black and almost oily in appearance; they’re easy to identify from appearance alone. The tea liquor is a very appealing light purple color, but the flavor tends to be on the weaker side, with a hint of bitterness and astringency. Because the *Zi Juan* tea variety has only been officially grown for twenty-odd years, the relative faintness of the flavor likely has something to do with the age of the trees. At one point,

there was a tea merchant who tried oxidizing *Zi Juan* tea leaves to make shou puerh; this tea wasn’t received with much enthusiasm by buyers, however. I believe that the most important factor in a good tea is the innate characteristics of the tea leaves; while the art of processing can certainly add the icing on the cake (or “add flowers to the brocade,” as we say in Chinese), it cannot change the original nature of the leaf.

As for the appearance of *Zi Ya* tea leaves, the buds are noticeably white, while the leaves are slightly darker in color than regular green tea and the backs of the leaves are less downy. The liquor is clear and bright, and golden yellow in color (not red or purple). The tea has a full mouthfeel and a simple, elegant, slightly sweet flavor. *Zi Ya* tea contains higher levels of anthocyanins (a type of plant pigment).

These trees also contain more pectin than the leaves and buds of most other tea trees. If purple tea buds also contained more catechins and tea polyphenols than regular tea buds, then you'd expect the first impression when drinking *Zi Ya* tea to be similar to that of *Zi Juan*, with a noticeable bitterness and astringency. However, after numerous taste comparisons, this wasn't the case at all. The flavor was always simple and elegant, with a subtle sweetness. So, if we must make a pronouncement on the difference between *Zi Ya* and *Zi Juan*, it is this: *Zi Ya* is the more fragrant of the two, with a sweeter liquor. Master Tsai Yizhe, who has spent so many years researching and conserving the ecosystems of tea plantations, sees this phenomenon as a "gift from Nature."

In fact, there's really no need for us to name a favorite between the naturally occurring *Zi Ya* (Purple Bud) variety and the *Zi Juan* (Purple Beauty) tea variety that was cultivated using modern scientific techniques. Each has its own character, and any tea that is grown in the mountains, free from pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers or germination treatments, is already a wonderful choice. So, drink whichever pleases you most—the choice is yours! Tea has offered us the most wonderful bounty of variety, spanning thousands and thousands of unique cups. I hope to share some of them with all of you one day!



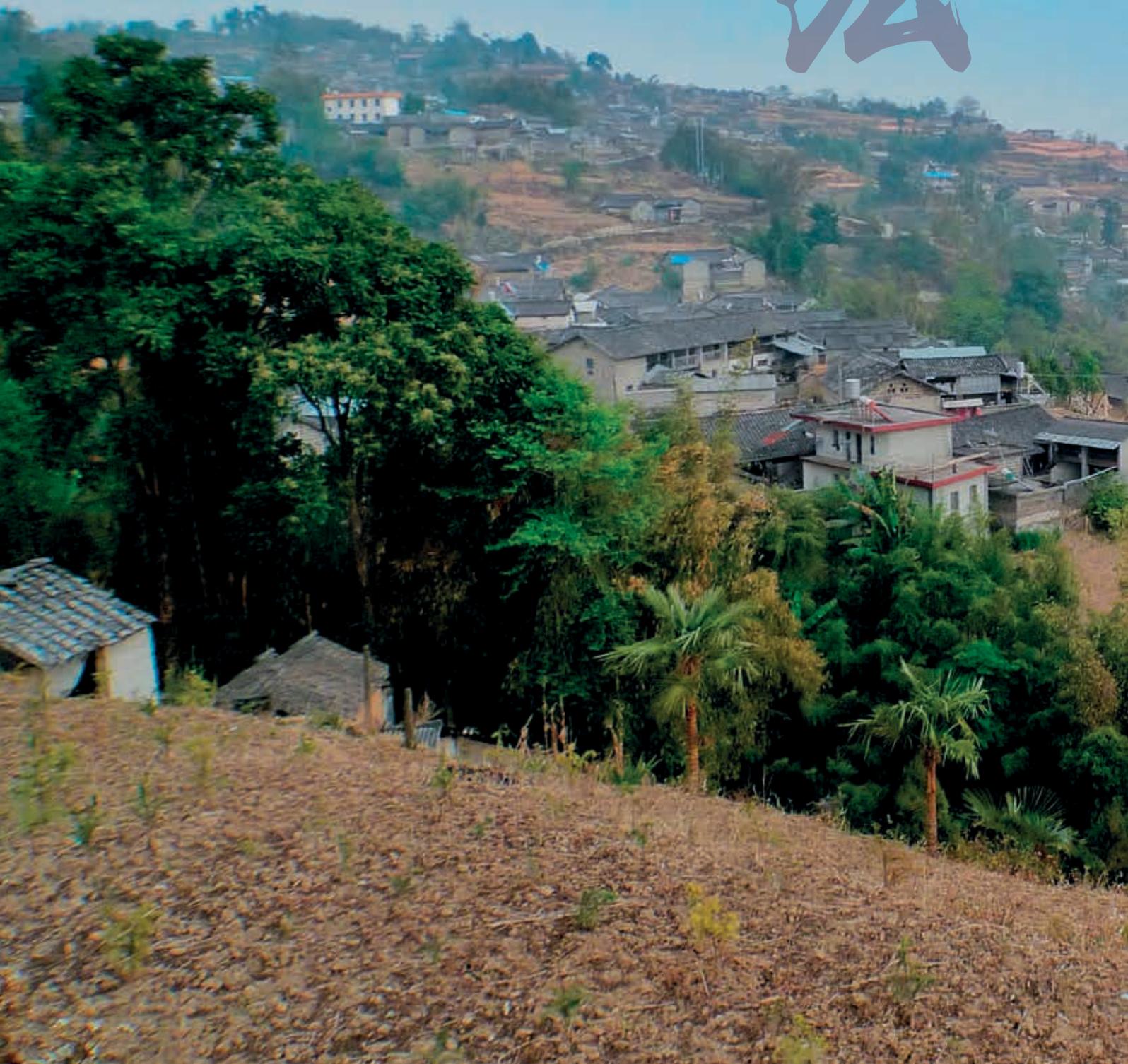
茶 Snow is now an official journalist of Global Tea Hut. We hired her to be our correspondent to Yunnan, traveling around with her bright spirit, love for tea and gorgeous smile, making friends with Chajin and tea farmers to take our magazine "South of the Clouds." We love her writing and her approach to tea. She is a perfect fit for our beloved Global Tea Hut!





A TOUR OF DEHONG

德宏



YUNNAN

HISTORY, LORE & TEA

作者: Luo Yingyin 羅英銀



WILD & ANCIENT TEA-GROWING AREAS ARE INCREDIBLE

難以置信野生古樹茶區



Stepping into the tea forest kingdom of Yunnan, we find puerh-growing areas primarily scattered throughout the Hengduan mountain range near the Lancang and Nujiang rivers and farther to the south. Along the lower reaches of the Nujiang, in the southwest of Yunnan, near the border with Myanmar, in addition to the beautiful and world-famous jade of Ruili, Dehong tea trees provide another type of green gem, glowing and shimmering in the spring breeze.

“Dehong (德宏)” is transliterated to Chinese from the Dai language. “De (德)” means beneath, while “Hong (宏)” refers to the Nujiang River. Together the meaning is: “Area on the Lower Reaches of the Nujiang.” The Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture is one of Yunnan’s eight ethnic minority autonomous regions. Jurisdiction over the administrative district has changed many times. In 2005, the prefecture’s capital was established in Mangshi, with Ruili as the secondary city and three counties of Longchuan, Yingjiang and Lianghe. Covering an area of 11,526 square kilometers, the prefecture is inhabited by numerous ethnic groups, including the Dai, Jingpo, Achang, De’ang, Lisu, Wa and Han people. Dehong has been inhabited for more than 5,000 years. In ancient times, it was known as the “Dianyue Elephant Riding Kingdom,” due to the many wild elephants that roamed the forests.

Dehong has been a natural paradise since primordial times—long before there were human eyes and hearts to enjoy its beauty. And locals have lived tea lives going back further than any calendar can reach. More than 4,000 years ago, ancestors of today’s De’ang ethnic group, the Pu, picked, processed and consumed tea leaves in sacred ceremonies, offered as prayers and also enjoyed as medicine and hospitality for visiting guests. Later, they planted tea gardens, and Dehong still contains numerous hundred- and thousand-year-old tea trees and tea gardens that were planted mostly by ancestors of the De’ang ethnic group. Consequently, historians refer to the De’ang people as “China’s ancient tea farmers.”

The De’ang believe that they are descended from Tea, honoring and praying to guardian Tea spirits, like most aboriginals in Yunnan. There is also some folklore suggesting that the creation myth of the De’ang is a world born out of a tea tree. This is a testament to the people’s deep and ancient relationship to tea that has become central to their life, culture and worldview.

The tea culture and tea production techniques of various Dehong ethnic groups were highly developed and widely propagated. Historical records recount that members of the Dai and Bai ethnic groups engaged in mutual trade of fabrics, tea and salt during the Yuan Dynasty period (1279–1368).

Nandian tea (南甸茶), which we will explore in more detail later on, was produced during this period. During the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, Dehong produced *Jinchi* tea (金齒茶), that is, today’s bamboo tube tea (*Zhutong* tea, 竹筒茶), as well as other tea products, such as *Gu* (沽茶) and *Yan* tea (醃茶, *not to be confused with Cliff Tea*), which we will also discuss later on in our journey.

The Dehong tea industry continued to develop to its present state. During the 1940s, the then-director of the Lianghe County Administrative Bureau, Feng Weide (封維德), wrote *An Elementary Introduction to Tea Growing* (種茶淺說). It describes techniques for planting, managing and harvesting tea, and provides the first written description of close-planted tea plantation production in Yunnan. By the 1960s, Lianghe County’s Dachang Tea Factory began producing *Moguo* tea (磨鍋茶) that initiated the wave of Yunnan roasted green teas that were popular throughout the later half of the twentieth century.

As we can see, Dehong has a long and rich history of growing, producing and consuming tea (the De’ang still eat tea leaves, as we will discuss later on in this article). It is culturally one of the richest regions of Yunnan, and no pilgrimage to the birthplace of tea, “South of the Clouds,” would be complete without a stop here.



POPPY CHANGED THE LANDSCAPE OF TEA

罂粟改變了景觀

In historical terms, culture develops from geography. Dehong is located in the western part of Yunnan, along the southern foothills of the Gaoligong Mountains, and, aside from Lianghe County, the entire prefecture lies along an international border. This border extends for 500 kilometers throughout the prefecture, with 24 towns and more than 600 villages bordering Myanmar. Dehong is a south-western border region agricultural prefecture. During the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China period, China found itself gripped in the turmoil of war, and frontier defenses were allowed to slip into disarray. Consequently, opium/poppy cultivation was rampant, and tea trees were chopped down throughout the region. The tea industry of Dehong was devastated. These factors combined with slash-and-burn agriculture caused many tea gardens to become “wild tea.” As a result, nearly all surviving tea trees are found in the high mountains. By 1950, only some 410 *mu* (畝, 1 *mu* = 1/6 acre) of tea gardens remained. As we survey the geography and history of Dehong, we can also learn from the negative decisions that have resulted in environmental degradation, as well as the positive shifts that have begun in the modern era to try to correct this course. In this way, this journey through Dehong will have the potential to change Dehong itself!





WILD TEA PRESERVED IN THE MOUNTAINS

野生茶保存在山裡

We traveled to Dehong in the spring, to see the wild tea-growing areas first-hand. We drove from Mangshi to the village of Daxiangshu near Fengping. On this three-hour-plus drive, we passed mountain after mountain as the road circled around the lofty peaks. The long, dusty mountain road seemed endless. After finally arriving at our destination, we still had to hike another half-hour before we came upon the wild tea trees stretching upward into the sunlight. Beneath our feet, the winding hillside path was covered in a thick layer of fallen leaves. To our left, we saw the sloping hillside, filled with an endless sea of branches waving bright green leaves. To our right, we could see mountains and valleys sprawling beneath us—the tea trees fluttered in the spring breeze amidst the forest greenery and blue sky. A tea tree poked out beside a cardamom tree, while another was growing right up against a banyan tree. Such sights inspire a Chajin, filling the heart with a free and glorious sensation that lingers on, drawing us back here in spirit when we sit at home much later, sipping our spoils from such a lovely trip and reminiscing about all the wonderful places in Dehong we've visited. Such trees make an impression on the heart!

Some of these lucky tea trees are large and several hundred years old. Others are several decades old and are wild, propagated naturally from the seeds of the nearby large trees. These trees of different generations all grow together. Some trees have very large leaves, while some others have very slender leaves and branches. One thing they all have in common, however, is that the very few young tea buds are very difficult to pick. Aborigines are therefore very skilled climbers, often placing a board leaning up against the first fork in the tree and running up the plank to get into the tree with the ease and grace of someone long accustomed to climbing and foraging in the forest. Most of these tea-growing areas survive as mixed tea forests. The trees were long ago individually planted and can be considered first-generation Yunnan tea gardens, the categorization of which we shall discuss in the coming pages.

自然和樹為一體

環境是茶

FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION TEA GARDENS

第一和第二代茶園

What is a so-called “second-generation” tea garden? Yunnan contains the largest number of preserved wild tea trees and ancient tea gardens in China and the entire world. These growing areas contribute to the diversity of Yunnanese tea. The defining characteristics and development of Yunnan’s more than four million *mu* (1 *mu* = 1/6 acre) of tea gardens are the result of a combination of factors, starting from the time that humankind first discovered and began to utilize tea, and influenced by the historical backdrop of various time periods, as well as different tea tree domestication and cultivation characteristics over time.

There is no standard way of classifying tea gardens in Yunnan. Some agricultural specialists classify the tea tree resources and tea gardens/plantations of Yunnan into two distinct types: first- and second-generation gardens. I would add to this a third and fourth “generation” or “wave” of tea production. These later two types of tea cultivation move away from what could be called a “garden,” and into what should technically be referred to as a “plantation,” with a focus on greater density

of trees, increased yield and a commercial approach to tea production. However, as we shall soon discuss, second-generation gardens are, in many ways, a phase between the first-generation gardens, which were only for tribal use, and third-generation plantations, since they weren’t yet large scale enough to be called “plantations,” but were commercial.

Yunnan’s first-generation tea gardens are based on the oldest type of tea garden model. They contain five- to six-hundred-year-old tea trees, which local farmers used to create a surrounding fence of trees. These gardens were structured as several dozen tea trees planted deep in the forest, in front of and behind the house or surrounding the farmers’ cultivated land. It is important to remember that these villages were more remote than they are today. They were generally located deep in the mountains, and the forest was only ever a stone’s throw away from any house in the village.

The few trees surviving to this day now stand as village landmarks or guardian spirits. This type of landscape can be seen in all the major

tea-growing areas of Yunnan. Within Dehong, these exalted tea trees can be seen near village houses in various places, including Luxi, Ruili and Lianghe. An example is the large cultivated tea tree discovered by a survey in 2003, which is located beside a river in the village of Xianrendong in Luxi’s Jiangdong Township. A Dali tea variety, the tree is 1,800 years old and more than 27 feet tall, with a 2.5 feet base diameter. Another such tree was discovered in 1999 in the Longchuan County, Huguo Township village of Laokong. This tree is 800 years old, more than 30 feet tall, and has a 2.8 feet base diameter. Yet another large cultivated tea tree was discovered in 1981 in Lianghe County, Mengyang Township, Kazi Baimatou village. This tree is also approximately 800 years old with a height of nearly 20 feet and a 2.6 feet base diameter.

Although these ancient tea trees were not grown in plantations, they were grown for tribal cultivation. The leaves were used in sacred ceremonies and prayers, for healing and spiritual communion with Nature, as well as in hospitality offerings to visiting guests.



人與自然和諧相處



Even in more modern times, the market value of these trees was never very high. As tea prices have risen in the last few years, however, tea sellers have begun to seek out these teas for their unique characteristics, rarity and growth as single solitary trees. This has led to several issues in the puerh market, including the unfortunate death of some such trees due to over-harvesting.

This oldest form of tea cultivation is based on “single tree cultivation” or mixed planting with other forest trees like camphor and/or flowering trees, which have grown together and are preserved to this day. The aboriginals knew that nearby trees, plants and biodiversity influenced the health of the tree and the characteristics of the tea as well. True first-generation tea gardens make up less than 2% of the total tea-growing area in Yunnan.

Yunnan’s second-generation tea gardens are also the result of their historical context. Profit derived from international trade directly led to large-scale tea production, changing the face of tea production in Yunnan. Trade between China and Europe steadily increased throughout the nineteenth

century. Europeans particularly favored Chinese tea and silk. In 1886, the Chinese tea trade accounted for 95% of the volume of tea sold throughout the world. The Qing Dynasty government vigorously promoted tea production, in order to purchase large quantities of weaponry and pay off the vast national debt. Around 1900, the throne approved the establishment of French and English customs offices in the Yunnan city of Simao. (Now renamed by its aboriginal name “Puerh,” which is where the tea gets its name, since it all went to this city for market sale to the rest of China and was therefore “tea from Puerh.”) This greatly stimulated tea production in the surrounding areas and solidified Simao’s position as the number one tea-producing county in Yunnan. According to customs statistics, the value of tea exported from Simao between 1912 and 1923 exceeded 110,000 taels of silver. Demand for tea continuously increased, as did the need for funds to support the fragile Chinese economy. Consequently, the natural or half-natural production model of Yunnan tea was destroyed, as the tea industry entered

an era of commodity production and second-generation tea gardens began to appear.

Second-generation tea gardens are commonly referred to as “*Man Tian Xing* (满天星, “Star-filled Sky”)” tea gardens. These gardens are dispersed throughout the various major tea-growing areas of Yunnan and comprise approximately 5% of the tea gardens in the province. Tea gardens of this stage are characterized as follows: most were planted during the late Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) through the Republic of China period (1912–1949); trees are primarily between 70 and 120 years old; garden composition is relatively uniform; trees are primarily Yunnan large-leaf varieties; trees were planted in groups, following the mountain slope; the planting density was low, which provided excellent space for tea growth; the trees enjoyed outstanding topographical conditions and fertile soil; and trees were planted near villages, which allowed for convenient supervision and harvesting. Dehong is a rich and biodiverse area with the potential for outstanding tea production.



Offering Free Tea

Offering free tea—such thoughtfulness! This was a common sight in the small towns and villages of China and Taiwan during bygone agricultural days. Nothing captures the spirit of tea as well as offering free roadside tea! People would leave a jar or large pot with some bowls by their house, at the outskirts of the village or even on well-traveled roads for passersby to refresh themselves. What courtesy! What hospitality! Imagine someone walking a kilometer or two twice a week to wash the pot or jar and bowls, and replace the tea with fresh leaves and water. And they did all of this for people they may never have met! They were sharing and giving without thanks.

This takes us back to another time, when neighbors loved each other as family. There is a lovely Chinese saying, which is “One-house people shouldn’t talk like two-house folk. (一家人不說兩家的事)”

This is a way of saying, “Don’t be so formal, we are family!” Finding a place where people still take the time to refresh strangers, help and love each other and honor one another as one people is rewarding in the modern world. It should come as no surprise that such a place is one filled with tea spirit, or that tea is the medium of this hospitality.

We were so inspired to find this dying tradition alive in Dehong. We found free tea offerings when we came to a small village in some township of Luxi City, Dehong prefecture, Yunnan. We found it at a mountain-top bus stop, served in traditional pottery. Again, in a different mountainous area, we found it at a village intersection, using modern concrete paint buckets to hold the water. Have you had anything to drink? That taste of cool tea was extremely refreshing. Even though I don’t know you, I must say thanks.

奉茶

真理的款待

Food in Dehong

China contains many different ethnic minority groups, and Yunnan Province alone contains the most. On average, one in every three residents of Yunnan belongs to an ethnic minority group. Each of these groups possesses its own unique food culture: the De'ang people enjoy drinking tea; the Dai people prefer sour flavors; the Hani favor raw foods and salads; while the Jingpo people are known for their preserved and pickled foods. A rich ethnic tapestry gives rise to a rich variety of food cultures in Yunnan.

德宏飲食

茶是歡迎

1. It was already afternoon when we returned from the tea mountain. Seeing a restaurant on the outskirts of the city, we stopped and ordered food. This gentleman was the owner and chef. Aboriginals in Yunnan love hosting guests. Even at a restaurant, you may feel like you are family.

2. Soup cooked with poppy fruit is said to have numerous health benefits. The most frequently mentioned benefit is increasing intelligence.

3. Peanut flour cake balls in soup is a favorite afternoon dessert. This thick, sweet soup is very satisfying and is really a meal in and of itself.

4. During the Qingming festival, everyone makes day lily cakes (黃花粑粑, huanghua baba). The locals extract the juice from a type of wild day lily, which they then mix with sticky rice and steam. They eat the cakes dipped into powdered spices. They are delicious!



1



2



3



4



THIRD-GENERATION TEA PLANTATIONS: INDUSTRY BEGINS

Dehong's tea industry began to develop rapidly following the Communist Revolution, with the first wave of growth occurring between 1950 and 1966. This is the beginning of what could be called the “third-generation” tea *plantations*, with a shift from “garden” to “plantation” cultivation methods.

Tea plantations increased in area from some 400 *mu* to more than 30,000. And this was just the first stage of growth! The next wave, which occurred between 1977 and 1990, brought an increase in the area of the prefecture covered in tea plantations to over 160,000 *mu*. Tea growing became an important means by which rural people could escape from poverty.

The fourth “wave” or “generation” of tea cultivation in Dehong, and Yunnan, is much more modern. It follows the rise in interest in organic products. With an ever increasing market demand for organic products, organic tea plantations have begun to rise in importance. We will discuss this shift to fourth-generation tea plantations and

the relevance of organic farming after a bit more historical exploration of third-generation plantations.

After the Communist Revolution in 1950, the government of Dehong vigorously promoted wave after wave of growth in tea production, to replace opium farming as a solution to its predicament as a frontier agricultural prefecture. At the time, the Lianghe County Administrative Bureau issued a communiqué regarding a total ban on opium and switch to tea growing. It further arranged for the transport from Tengchong of eighteen “packs” of tea plants (roughly 1,350 kg), which were then distributed to each of its administrative areas for planting, that is, today's Luxi County Jiangdong Township, Longchuan County Wangzishu Township, and Yingjiang County Yousongling Township. The government vigorously promoted tea as a replacement for opium, which consequently led to the promotion of new tea growing techniques and methodologies.

As a result, tea production gradually increased. By 1954, opium/poppy

growing was prohibited in all mountain areas of the prefecture. The government began providing subsidies to further encourage tea production. For example, the government provided subsidies for new tea plantation construction, sent tea plants without charging for seeds or transport, offered rice in exchange for planting tea trees (for each 1,000 tea seeds planted, farmers received 500 g of rice) and gave each resident who worked on the tea plantations 1 RMB and 500 g of rice per day of labor. These concrete benefits allowed tea growing to rapidly overtake opium throughout Dehong Prefecture, as new tea plantations began to stretch across the countryside. By 1957, the total area of Dehong's tea plantations reached 8,000 *mu*, which represents a 20-fold increase in only eight years!

Later, during China's “Great Leap Forward” (1958–1961), the government promoted a new slogan: “Step out the door and see a tea mountain, step in the door and see a tea factory. The roaring sound of machinery will



茶 Such plantation tea can be grown organically, and we should support such endeavors, though the quality will always suffer, due to the increase in yield and production such farming is designed to facilitate.

第三代茶葉種植園

bring 10,000 years of good fortune.” The government sent agricultural scientists and technicians to mountain areas to provide guidance at the local level. By 1966, the prefecture’s tea plantations had, like the Great Leap Forward slogan, grown to an area of more than 30,000 *mu*. This was Dehong’s first phase of rapid tea expansion.

The tea trees planted in this stage were primarily Yunnan large-leaf varieties from Changning, Fengqing and other areas. The planting technique was based on “tree to tree, following the mountain slope” grouped planting. According to Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra*: “The planting method is like that used in growing melons.” In other words, the planting density is low. These cultivation methods are characteristic of Yunnan’s second-generation tea plantations.

These tea-growing methods could be seen in other areas of Yunnan at the end of the Qing Dynasty and during the Republic of China period, but by the end of the 1950s, these areas had

already progressed to third-generation tea plantation methodologies, that is, contour-strip farming (“*taidi cha*,” 台地茶), which is proper industrial, environmentally *un*-friendly agriculture. During our trip to Dehong, the prefectural government provided materials which indicating that Dehong’s tea growing methodologies prior to 1976 were still based on the second-generation “tree to tree, following the mountain slope” principles. Perhaps due to Dehong’s remote location, its agricultural policies and techniques were unable to keep up with those in other areas.

Why have I chosen to emphasize the stages of cultivation techniques and tea plantation development? I have chosen to do this primarily because growing techniques affect later tea tree development. Puerh quality is greatly determined by its environment: the mountain/region it comes from, type of garden and age of tree(s). In terms of raw tea materials used to make puerh tea, ancient trees are preferable to old trees, and old trees are better

than small trees. Today, this is common knowledge. Tea trees are called “ancient,” “old,” and “small” based on their age, but growing techniques and planting density also directly affect the quality of the tea leaves used to produce puerh.

Ancient tree tea and wild tea are grown in biodiverse forests. Tea trees in first- and second-generation tea gardens (which are called “eco-arboreal” in this magazine) are planted in low density, with several feet of separation between the trees. This provides the trees with excellent growing space, and the several types of tea gardens/plantations described above provide Dehong tea producers with excellent leaves for puerh tea production. However, the third-generation plantations, if created in a way that strips the natural contour of the mountain and accompanied by agrochemicals, does not result in quality tea. The quality of puerh and dian hong is defined almost exclusively by its terroir, so if the environment is not biodiverse and rich, the resulting tea will also lack depth and character.

HUGE RED TEA PLANTATIONS BEGIN

開始大量紅茶種植園

The Dehong tea industry development did not escape the effects of China's Cultural Revolution. This period's slogan was "Take grain as the key link to ensure all-around development." Tea trees were destroyed to make way for farming of food grains. Between 1968 and 1975, tea plantations experienced negative growth for the first time since the Communist Revolution in 1949.

As we mentioned earlier, after 1977, tea production in Dehong entered its second wave of rapid growth. The government intensively promoted tea production by providing subsidies and creating model tea plantations, establishing standardized tea plantations in more than 400 locations. Tea production once again entered a period of rapid development, and, by 1990, tea plantations in Dehong covered an area greater than 160,000 *mu*. Tea growing had become an important aspect of the agricultural economy and a means for rural residents to escape from poverty. By using new cultivation techniques and selecting Yunnan large-leaf tea varieties, economic prosperity came to villages of Dehong, such as Luxi's Hetou and Daopo, Longchuan's Wangzishu Xiaoni lower village and Mangshi's Huaqiao farm.

Tea cultivation during this period was based on "level strips and close bush planting," which is characteristic of Yunnan's third-generation tea plantations. These plantations are characterized by planting perpendicular to the slope with level arrangement of trees, and the tea varieties are dominated by seedling families of Yunnan large-leaf teas. Third-generation tea plantations formed the mainstay of Yunnan's tea industry and were extensively promoted throughout the tea-growing regions of the province. Operation of these tea plantations is characterized by intensive use of land, technology and capital. Because the tea trees are primarily between 30 and 40 years old, they are in their prime growing years and satisfy the objectives of early investment, early yield and early profit—all of which are quality-killers.

On this trip to Dehong, we continuously passed these third-generation tea plantations growing in the lowlands and as a green carpet covering the hillsides as we drove through the outskirts of Mangshi.

The environment of a place gives rise to its industry. Yunnan is the birthplace of tea. Yunnanese red tea (*dian hong*, 滇紅) made its way throughout the world beginning in the

1930s. Specifically, in 1938 the first batch of Yunnan red tea was shipped through Hong Kong to London and achieved instant fame, selling for high prices. Fengqing, Mengku, Menghai and other Yunnan tea-growing areas began producing large quantities of red tea. Crushed red tea sold in teabags is the highest-selling tea in the world, making up approximately 90% of tea sales worldwide. Yunnan large-leaf tea varieties also provide tea for this market.

Red tea production came to Dehong in 1974 and is primarily focused on gongfu red tea, which is also known as "congou" tea in the West (see this year's June issue of *Global Tea Hut*, which is all about gongfu red tea); crushed teabag tea; and red pearl tea. Because the international market for crushed red tea is so large and Dehong's third-generation tea plantations are focused on high yield and high profit, most tea plantations produce tea for mass-market red tea sales. Unfortunately, this type of agriculture decreases the quality of tea, and, worse yet, harms the environment and health of the farmers. Ending unsustainable agriculture is a goal that all tea lovers worldwide should be striving to achieve together!





ORGANIC TEA PLANTATIONS

有機茶園

乾淨的茶是潔淨健康

純淨發自內心

After the 1990s, Dehong's tea industry entered an era of stable growth. With the dawn of the 21st century, the trend in agriculture toward production of environmentally friendly natural food products has become clear. This has led to a rise in natural tea growing techniques and organic tea plantations. According to statistics, in 2004, Dehong contained 889 *mu* of tea-growing areas that were certified as organic by the Organic Tea Research and Development Center (China). By 2005, the tea plantations in Dehong with China Green Food Development Centre (CGFDC) "Green Food" certification covered an area of 18,000 *mu*. Recently, these number have grown, with more than 1,000 *mu* of organic tea flourishing in Dehong.

These are fourth-generation tea plantations. Organic tea plantations are based on the following ideas: confor-

mance to organic agricultural requirements, cultivation based on organic farming techniques and coordination with the natural ecology, and allowing the growing environment to maintain stability and long-term health. Farmers do not use chemical fertilizers, pesticides or genetically modified plant varieties. Certified organic tea plantations form the primary direction and objective of tea plantation growth today and into the future. This example should inform all tea production, and not just in Dehong, or even Yunnan, but throughout the world. There is no need for unsustainable agriculture that is profit driven and without long-term scope or a perspective that includes the health of the local environment, the farmers who cultivate the land and the long-term health adversities of those who consume such tea. Hopefully, Dehong will continue changing!

FAMOUS HISTORICAL TEAS

著名古代茶

We have quickly glanced over the development of Dehong tea, but the history and prehistory of tea is very long indeed. It started from the point of initial discovery and use of tea as a sacred medicinal herb, proceeded to domestication and then cultivation of tea, and then eventually, tea became an independent agricultural product grown on a large scale. The Dehong area produced various tea products prior to the start of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) and also possessed its own unique ethnic culture. Below, we briefly introduce several historical teas:

Nandian tea (南甸茶) from the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368): Historical records describe this tea. It was produced through heat processing using boiling water, and then sealed, pressed and fermented.

Gu tea (沽茶): This tea was used by various ethnic groups of Dehong when entertaining guests. According to the *Baiyi Zhuan* (百夷傳, literally, the “Account of One Hundred Barbarians”), *Gu* tea was produced as follows: “In the spring and summer, they pick and then boil the leaves of mountain tea trees. They then seal the leaves in tubes of bamboo. After one or two years, they remove and prepare the leaves.”

Jinchi tea (金齒茶): During the nineteenth year of the Wanli Era (ca. 1591), of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), Huang Yizheng’s *Shiwu Ganzhu* (事物紺珠) listed this as a type of tea. It is named for its origin during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) in areas under the control of the “*Jinchi* Guard,” a region that includes today’s Baoshan and Dehong. *Jinchi* tea processing includes both *shai qing* (曬青, sun-drying) and bamboo tea. It was produced by boiling freshly picked tea leaves, rubbing them in the hands, and then either sun-roasting or packing and roasting the tea in bamboo.

Yan tea (醃茶): This ancient edible tea was produced by the De’ang people. Because of its slightly sour flavor, it is also known as “sour tea.” It is produced by picking young tea buds, which, after boiling and air-drying, are packed in palm tree leaves and placed in a pit located somewhere high and dry. The hole is filled in with soil to a level higher than the surrounding ground and then covered with palm tree leaves. The leaves are then covered with rocks to prevent water from seeping into the hole and ruining the tea. After a certain period of time, the tea is dug up and eaten. It can be eaten with seasoning, such as salt, nuts, chilies and ginger or chewed by itself.



紫
雲
茶



Traveling in Dehong

As the season turns to Spring, the buds on the tea trees flutter in the wind, beckoning tea lovers such as ourselves to step into the mountains and taste their flavor and drink in the spirit of this season and place. Traveling through these mountains to seek out tea was the primary purpose of our trip. Yunnan is a place of many ethnic groups and even more cultures. Beyond the mountains lie even more mountains. We observed various everyday activities in their pure and natural surroundings. Although amateurs, we took photographs whenever the opportunity presented itself, hoping to preserve these fleeting, precious moments.

1. In Chudonggua Village, Santai Mountain Township, Mangshi, residents live above their chickens and pigs, making full use of the available land.

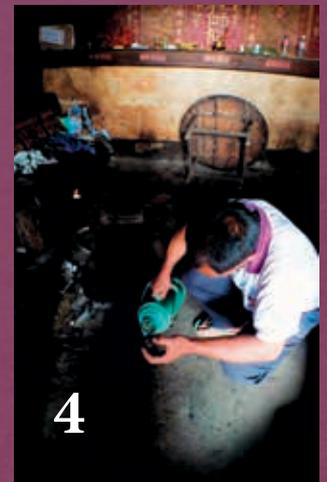
2. This is the home of a Han family. They enjoy a basic and peaceful lifestyle.

3. In the countryside, several dozen kilometers from the city and with only two buses per day, this bus stop stood resplendent amidst the green forest.

4. In Hebian Village, Jiangdong Township, Mangshi villagers are honest and hospitable. No table or chairs were visible in the main room, but as soon as they saw us they hurriedly brewed tea for us to drink. Tea is always and ever flowing in Dehong amongst the aboriginals!

5. Possessions big and small of a De'ang household—both inside and outside the house, there is order amid the chaos.

6. "Guide stones" are erected beside a mountain road. This is a local custom. Regardless of whether you have a wish or a warning, inscribe it in a stone tablet and embed it into the ground and hope that others can share in your blessing. There were prayers and warnings both on this hill.



EXPANSION PACK IV

Wild Bud Evening Sky

野夜空茶





This month, we are offering a very special Expansion Pack. We were very fortunate to get ten of the twenty or so kilograms of wild, all-bud Evening Sky. This is a very rare chance to taste a wild version of the tea we all love so much! If you love this month's tea, you won't want to miss this chance!

This amazing tea comes from higher up than the ordinary Evening Sky, which is from wild gardens at around 1,700 meters above sea level and is harvested from wild trees that are between forty and two hundred years old. The trees are sparse and follow the contours of the mountain, with biodiversity, no irrigation or agrochemicals, and all else that makes up a living tea. These are healthy gardens, as you no doubt felt in the cleanliness of the Tea of the Month. In fact, we are often inspired by Dehong, which is making strides in the promotion of organic tea in both second-generation gardens and bigger plantations. We can only hope these movements will gather momentum as more tea lovers understand fully the environmental implications of their tea consumption.

The wild, all-bud version of Evening Sky comes from an altitude of around 2,000 meters above sea level, deeper into the forest and higher up the mountain than the gardens ordinary Evening Sky comes from. These wild trees, shown on pages 5, 6 and 8 of this issue, grow huge with thick whitish-purple buds that slowly unravel to the sun, changing to green as they grow into very large leaves. These wild trees can be up to eight hundred years old, though most are younger than that. The average is between one and two hundred years old. The main difference between this and our Tea of the Month is that this tea is only the buds of these higher altitude and older trees, selected and picked by hand.

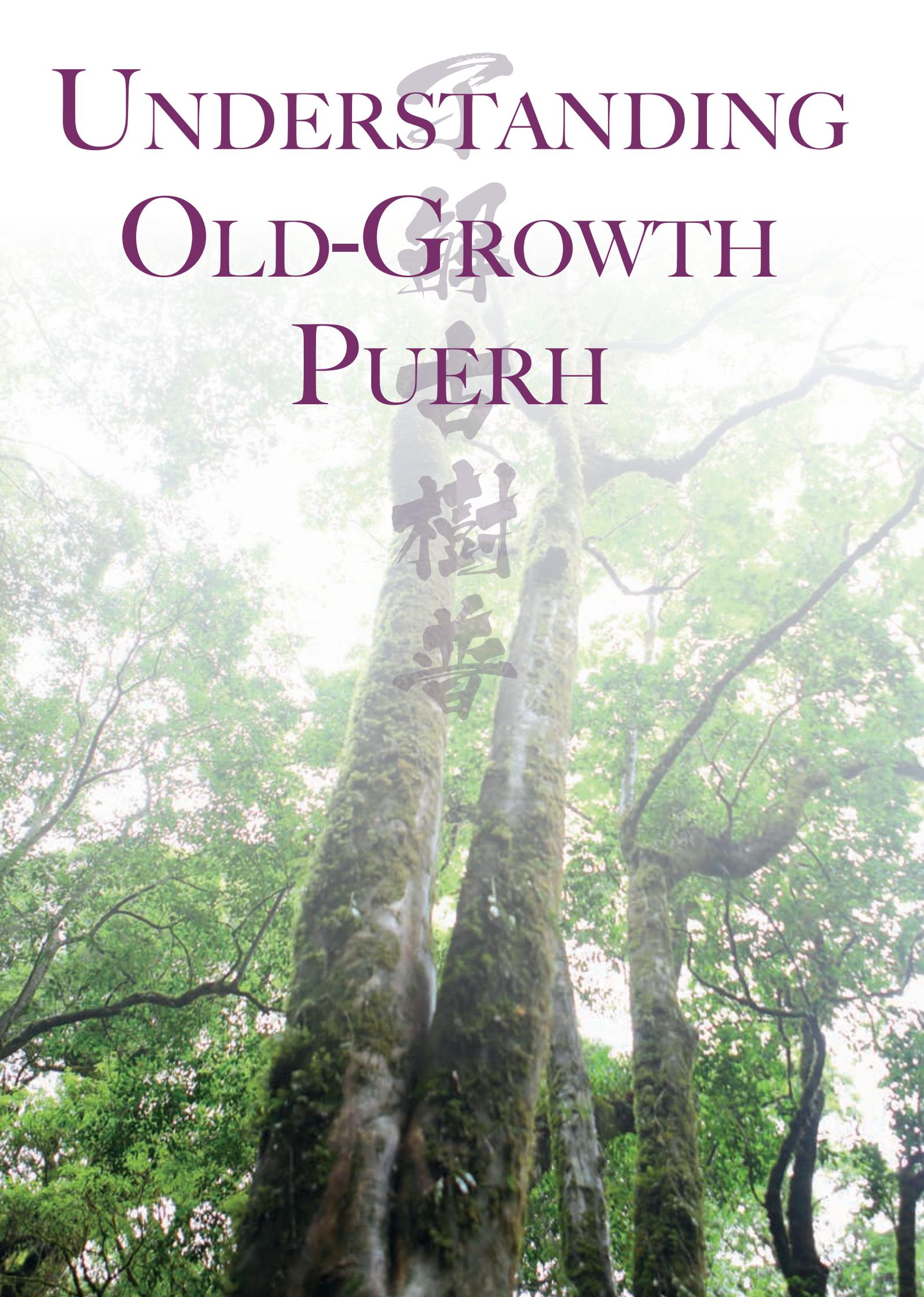
This tea is fruity and peachy like our Tea of the Month, but with a richer and deeper Qi. It also is sweeter, coming from only buds. This is a rare chance to taste a truly wild tea, ethically sourced and with all the vibrancy of clear pristine mountains. Also, a portion of this tea was donated to us by a kind and dear friend who is in close connection with the locals. As a result, we are offering this at a very affordable price. Go to the website to get yours!

www.globalteahut.org/expansions

200 grams of this Wild Evening Sky for only \$50 + shipping

UNDERSTANDING OLD-GROWTH PUERH

解
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The puerh world is rife with misunderstanding. The age of the trees, the kind of garden and the region a puerh tea comes from all make up its quality. For that reason, an understanding of the controversies and the nature of what defines “old-growth” puerh tea is essential for exploration of the genre. Knowing the details of this one aspect of puerh helps you become a more informed customer and wiser Chajin.

茶人: Wu De

There is now and has ever been a teahouse full of gossip, rumors and misinformation swirling like leaves in a bowl around the tea world. Secrets abound: traditional brewing methods, processing skills held by families, lost clay-refining secrets master potters only taught their best students and miles of scroll covered in stories, legends and marketing tall tales. And as time has passed, with a greater commoditization and recreationalization of tea, the latter marketing misinformation has spread like the tea clones planted on hills and in valleys all over Asia and beyond. Discussing the issue of misinformation in the tea market can be insightful or depressing. I thought if we had an issue to focus on, we could use this example to explore some very important tea wisdom, learning together in the process.

Through some emails from within this community, it came to my attention that Western tea lovers were beginning to have discussions around the misinformation in the modern puerh market, specifically in relation to claims about the age of trees used in puerh: A lot of vendors claim their tea is “old-growth” or comes from “ancient trees” when the tea, in fact, does not. I thought this was then the perfect opportunity to start a dialogue on the issue of marketing tall tales in general, focusing on claims about tea tree ages specifically. I always like to converse from the general to the specific, so let’s put a kettle on and brew up some nice puerh, sharing some cups and ideas over a nice, relaxing session. I say “relaxing” because these are potentially polarizing topics that are best discussed

calmly, and over cups of tea. Please be sure to read all the way through for that reason, as reading only parts of this discussion may leave you with unintended impressions.

Rivers & Lakes

One of the larger puerh magazines in China is called “*Jianghu*,” which literally translates to “Rivers and Lakes.” The “*Jianghu*” the magazine is named after is the setting of kungfu movies and novels—the land beyond the reach of the empire and its laws; the place where might is right and nothing else stands. In other words, the Eastern equivalent of the “Wild West” (the analogy is perfect, truly). In the tea market there are also no regulatory bodies, and information travels the way it did in the Wild West, and tales grow in the telling, especially where marketing is concerned. The fact is, the tea world is rife with misinformation and marketing ploys.

Like the gunslinger or kungfu master, you have to be skilled to avoid being tricked. *Jianghu* is a place where skill is the only currency, in fact. And let’s be clear, *you will pay tuition to get to that level of understanding!* You will buy tea and teaware that isn’t what it should be, or that you will grow out of on your journey. A teacher can help, but there is always some learning done the hard way, no matter how good a student you are. I’m not sure how good a teacher I am, but I am a decent student. I am humble and listen to my teachers, but that hasn’t helped me—I’ve still paid my share of tuition. And so has every teacher I know!

With the growth and globalization of the tea market, these problems have only grown and also deformed through mistranslations and cultural misunderstandings. One of the main reasons this issue exists is that vendors are the primary source of information for tea these days. Tea teachers are either farmers growing tea for money or merchants selling it. And vendors are *never* ideal sources of information. This is true in any market. It isn’t the camera store’s job to educate you. As a consumer, you are responsible for your own research. The camera store tries to supply lots of gear for many different kinds of photography, and if you go in without an idea of what you want or need, you will indeed buy things you don’t want or need, spending tuition. You wouldn’t want to attend a photography school created and sponsored by Sony, for example, no matter how great their cameras are. A photography school should teach photography, not promote certain products. The issue isn’t really this simple, but in general, it helps to understand that vendors are not great nor trustworthy sources of information. But as the bard and sage Leonard Cohen so beautifully sang, “The dealer wants you thinking it’s either black or white. Thank God it’s not that simple...” I’ve learned a lot from tea merchants over the years—Master Tsai, Master Lu and Zhou Yu just to name a few—but I also understand why my teacher, Master Lin, has refrained from such a career and suggested that schools and/or teachers exist alongside and in cooperation with tea merchants. (This kind of free and unbiased school is what we are trying to build here in Taiwan.)



It is important to understand that I am not saying that tea merchants are untrustworthy *people*, merely that their *information* is such, and that it is thus in a huge spectrum of hues from black to very light gray. In a way, this is just how things are and should be. We consumers must educate ourselves and learn to judge tea and teaware on our own. Once you understand tea, you aren't susceptible to misinformation anymore. In the meantime, we do our best to seek out honest vendors who are trying their best to help educate us. Also, we need to create more schools and publications like this that are not endorsed by anyone, trying to promulgate information without financial motivation. We aren't the only ones, of course. There are other programs, blogs, scholars and tea teachers working towards the same goal of tea education. And let me state clearly that I am not trying to malign tea vendors. As I just said, some of the most important teachers in my life are tea merchants, and without merchants where would I

get tea? I don't think the solution is to stop the tea market or ban teachings from vendors, but rather that more ad-free publications like this, schools and teachers that aren't vendors can *cooperate* with tea merchants to create a healthier environment for students. I think that medicine is an apt analogy for this, because the development of Western medicine necessarily separated doctors from pharmacists, understanding that so long as doctors have a vested interest in selling medicine, we won't be able to regulate medical care or ensure that doctors are prescribing the best medicine, rather than the most profitable. Doctors give prescriptions and pharmacists supply the medicine—that is how it's always been. And since this gap between pharmacist and doctor has closed, more corruption has influenced healing in the West. In the same way, ad-free magazines and unendorsed tea schools can cooperate with merchants. We work hard to uphold these principles here at the Hut. You won't find advertisements in these

pages, nor gimmicky machines or silly teas we were paid to review, nor shills (hidden advertisements) disguised in articles that are intended to promote a product, business or merchant. At the Tea Sage Hut, we do our best to educate guests, and also take them out to various tea shops we find to be more honest, so they can learn other perspectives and also purchase the tea and teaware they need. I wouldn't say that we are perfect in providing good tea education, but we do our best.

Leaving out the obviously "black" information, and vendors who use outright scams to sell tea, which aren't really worth discussing, I think there are still three important reasons why merchant-based information should always be second-guessed. Even if the merchant is an honest one, with a love for tea and a true and honest desire to share tea wisdom, there is still reason for us consumers to always take a step back and double-check, research on our own and develop our own skills. Healthy skepticism is required, in



🌿 Old-growth trees and tea cake of Jingmai: “Forest Bridge.”

other words. Before discussing these three reasons individually, however, let me say that this skepticism has to be *healthy*. Being too critical can really get in the way of any learning. Whenever I am with a teacher I respect, even a vendor, I do my best to stay humble, receptive and open to receive anything. I try to be a good student, in other words. I can be skeptical later, after class. Over the years, one of the most important lessons I have learned is that being too critical in the classroom (or any setting where learning is possible) frustrates my own education. It limits how much I learn, in other words. I don't want that. And I hope you don't either, so I would suggest staying open-minded and receptive when learning and then cultivating your healthy skepticism at home—double-checking facts, doing experiments and making your own conclusions. True wisdom is always experiential, and a teacher who isn't suggesting you experiment and find out for yourself is robbing you of the skills you need to grow. Anyway, let's

move on to the three reasons that even honest tea merchants must, ultimately, be light gray at best.

Drink Your Tea

Firstly, I think one of the biggest sources of misinformation in the modern world, let alone the tea world, is what we could call “talking when you should be listening.” This has to do with the caveat I just gave about keeping a “beginner's mind” in any learning environment, and doing so for your own sake, since being too critical frustrates your ability to learn, as well as how much you take in and digest. The Internet has given everyone a voice and that can make things confusing. Anyone can make a blog or YouTube channel and start blasting information. Imagine if you showed up for the first day of class at college and walked into a huge lecture hall where hundreds of people were mingling, chatting and roaming around like a party.

Where to sit? Whom to listen to? What's going on here? Where is the syllabus? Who is the professor? This is a very real analogy for the modern day, especially the online tea world. Just try searching for tea information online if you don't believe me.

Having experience as both a student and teacher has taught me that good teachers are *always* good students. This seems so obvious to me, but sometimes the simplest truths that are right in front of our faces are actually the hardest to see. How can you have anything to say if you haven't first learned? How can you tell me about a book you haven't yet read? Why would you want to talk when you should be listening? Even after fifteen years of daily tea practice, I still didn't feel ready to teach anyone. Sometimes I still feel that way now, ten years further down the road. I wonder how I can help anyone with anything when I still have so much development left in myself. You can see where this is going, I think. It is obvious that you must learn to teach.

This is a modern issue: Young man gets interested in tea on Tuesday and starts writing in an authoritative voice on Friday—talking when he should be listening, teaching when he should be learning. And while you can do both at the same time (I am still learning tons every day), it is much better to have the beginning of our education devoted to just learning. A doctor needs some medical schooling before working in a hospital. This doesn't mean he can't help out while he's still in school or that he stops learning when he starts practicing, but that an extended period devoted exclusively to learning is essential in any practice.

This doesn't mean beginners' voices shouldn't be heard. I have learned a lot from listening to beginners around the world share about tea. We encourage all of you to write for this magazine. Even beginners can share their learn-

ing process, experiences and more as they travel. But the modern tea world is definitely confused by people speaking authoritatively about things they have not studied deeply enough to talk about in such an assertive way.

Language & Culture

The second issue with vendor-based information has to do with language and culture. The fact is that there is only so far you can go in learning about something via a translator on annual trips to China, Japan or other parts. People are people, and they aren't always as open with foreigners with whom they cannot communicate. When you couple this with translation issues, a lot of misinformation can spread from East to West. Vendors often deal with middlemen or travel to

tea countries once a year and communicate indirectly with farmers or other vendors. Even if they are fluent, this can cause unintended problems, as tales grow when a tea passes hands—trees get older with each sale, loose-leaf aged puerh gets older, and so on. I suspect that most of the misinformation in the Western tea world falls into this category—caused by naïveté on the part of good-hearted tea vendors who believe what their sources have told them. The road to Hell can, indeed, be paved with good intentions.

Intention

The final reason why we consumers have to learn to stand on our own two feet is the source of one's tea education. This is the subtlest influence of the three. Basically, it boils down to



the way that our intentions affect our choices, which then affect the roads we travel in life. Those roads then become our education, which then becomes the source of what we share with others. Our orientation towards a practice will definitely determine how and what we learn.

The fact is that if I head to Yunnan with the sole intention of learning about tea and honoring the aboriginal people there, and then my friend George goes there to learn, but also to network and find sources for tea to sell in the West, George and I will have very different trips—meeting different kinds of people and having very different experiences along the way. Last year on our annual Global Tea Hut trip, the farmers in Jingmai were completely blown away by the fact that twenty-five people from around the world had come to their village just to

honor them and to learn. They said it was the first time ever that a tea person had visited them without any business intentions. And, of course, they showed us things that they hadn't ever showed any of those guests as a result. You may remember from her article that Snow cried at the end of our trip, saying how our genuine desire to learn and honor her home and its people had really touched her.

Of course, people treat a student different than a business associate. I can right now buy vintages of tea that a vendor could not, and for cheaper, because my friend would know that I would be buying the tea to drink and share, not to sell. Tea merchants often say as much, sometimes even asking, "For you or to sell?" as that will determine the price, and sometimes, if they will sell it at all. In the end, what I am saying is that if George takes business trips to tea-growing regions every year for twenty years, those experiences will form the basis of his tea education, which will in turn be what he passes on when he teaches about tea. And those perspectives may be super for those interested in becoming tea merchants, but maybe not ideal for those interested in learning tea above and beyond its market. Maybe George will become jaded, for example, dealing with many tea merchants who aren't always honest, whereas the student may avoid that altogether. A commercial photographer who focuses more on the business of photography than the art would be an ideal mentor for earning money as a photographer, but maybe not the best teacher if you are interested in the art itself (Matthew London is best for that).

Gotta Love 'Em

Now, before we move on to the specific issue of "old-growth" tall tales in the puerh market, I want to repeat that all this criticism is not meant to ostracize or insult tea vendors. I love tea vendors. I love you, I do. Don't be offended. I strive to be oriented towards positivity and optimism, and I hope that will come through in this discussion. The only positive reason for discussing all this is to help promote a healthier cooperation between tea lovers and merchants, and between

tea schools and merchants. We all want to help educate people on tea; it's in everyone's interest to do so. In other words, I hope that vendors and consumers alike find this discussion to be constructive criticism, as opposed to just tearing people or merchants down, which serves no purpose and certainly was never my intention.

Old-Growth Puerh

From one consumer to another, I can honestly say that merchants are merchants, and they will make business in any condition if they are good businessmen. And while there are a tremendous amount of false "old-growth" puerh teas in the market, there are also a lot of vendors who use the consumer's fears to promote their products by exaggerating the limitedness of such tea, and trying to promote themselves as safe and honest when others are deceptive. This is one of the oldest marketing tricks in the world. For example, you go into a lens shop in a camera market and the owner pulls out a fake lens, showing you the details of what makes it fake and warning you that many shops in the market are selling such fake lenses. In this way, he makes you scared to shop around the market and inspires trust in him, since he was the one to show you the trickery. Conscious or unconscious, intentional or otherwise, this is a marketing ploy.

Merchants the world over have been using scare tactics to sell products for millennia. Recently, some friends of mine showed me examples of this in the West. There was even an article on some blog, obviously written by a Westerner who had traveled little if at all in Yunnan, claiming that the oldest tree in Yunnan was only 800 years old and there was only one. He or she then went on to proclaim absolute faith in some vendor who had clued him or her into the fact that "all old-growth tea is fake." And now he/she was a trusted supporter and customer of that vendor, due to their "honesty." But anyone who has traveled to Yunnan could tell you that this claim is false. There is a very famous 3,000-plus-year-old tree in Lincang, a 2,700-year-old tree in Ai Lao and many other ancient trees. They certainly aren't as abundant as all the claims on cake wrappers,



but neither are they “nonexistent” or “impossible to come by.” Old-growth tea is very real.

Also, it should be noted that Chinese people often value relationships as much as or more than financial gain. This means that while there are relative market prices for commercial goods, especially those that are imported, products made by an artist, farmer or craftsman really can be bought for any price, depending on one’s relationship with the maker. If a farmer values your friendship, they may sell you tea at a “local” price, or even give it to you for free if the friendship means enough to them. This kind of dealing exists the world over, of course, but is more pronounced in China. One should not, therefore, assume from a distance that one knows how much a tea should cost, as it is truly relative to who is doing the buying. Several aboriginals in Yunnan, for example, have told me that there is a price for locals and a price for the fortune hunters and city-slickers.

My experience over the decades reminds me of the saying in our tradition: *As the person seeks the Leaf, the Leaf seeks the person.* Tea has a destiny. And be they vendors or tea lovers, people share tea in very different ways, depending on the energy you bring. If I visit Auntie Ai, for example, trying to do business and make money, she will sell me one kind of tea for one kind of price, but if I visit to get some tea to share through this nonprofit with tea lovers around the world and she understands these educational aims, I get another tea at a very different price. And, of course, if I visit her without the intention of buying anything, but rather just to drink tea with my sister whom I love, then she shares a whole other kind of tea. I have had friends who own tea shops and large collections of aged puerh ask me bluntly before if a tea I was interested in was for “drinking or selling.” And not only would the price be different for “selling,” but they often may not choose to sell the tea at all for that purpose. Some aged puerh teas are very valuable and selling it at a “friend’s price” doesn’t make sense if that friend is just going to go resell it at the retail value you yourself could also sell it for.

What I am saying is that how your journey—with what attitude and what experiences you are looking for—

will determine your choices. Your choices will determine which road you take, which people you meet and which kinds of tea you find. Yes, old-growth puerh is rare, and yes, it will most often be expensive. Master Lin has a cake from a single 1,800-year-old tree that was given to him when he was named one of the ten “Puerhians” of our time. I have a small jar of tea from the oldest tree in Ai Lao, gifted to me by Auntie Ai, and other small gifts I have received over the years. These are examples of very special and precious old-growth teas given for free.

Stay True of Heart

It is easy to get jaded as a consumer when facing a market without regulation or honesty—*Jianghu*. And then, over time, you want to throw out all the stories. You so yearn for facts that you become skeptical of anything that is unproven conclusively, and the more times you face dishonesty, growing more jaded, the more cynical you become. I understand this propensity. I, too, have faced such feelings. But it is important to not throw out one of the greatest joys of tea just because some of the people who sell it are dishonest, or allow other vendors to use your fears to sell you other products.

The fact is that if you visit almost any tea lover on Earth and they decide to share their favorite tea with you, it will be one with a story: a trip they took to Asia, a good friend, a magical shop or encounter, a beautiful farm or some glorious old trees they sat beneath in Ai Lao. This is true of most all human possessions. Your most valuable possessions most likely have some sentimental value. Even if your favorite thing is valuable financially, like a diamond ring, it is valuable to you because it was your grandmother’s or your engagement ring, etc. We invest our treasures with meaning. And the most meaningful things are always because of stories that mean something to the heart. I watched an interview with the author Michael Pollan recently in which he expressed a sentiment I agree with wholeheartedly. He said that being a consumer of mass-produced foods or products was the part of his identity of which he was the least proud.

In one of the first English books on tea, the author John Blofeld talks about how the tea space restores the deep mythology and poetry of legendary times, and how important that is for us modern people. Tea comes from distant lands, often enshrouded in mist, literally and figuratively. And after a few bowls or cups of tea, poetic words like “black dragon,” “cinnabar,” “alchemy” or “green mists over the isle of immortals” all start to make sense in a way they didn’t before. Let us not throw out the mysticism or magic of tea because of naughty vendors. Magic need not be interpreted as entertaining card tricks or special effects in a Marvel movie. Magic can be regarded simply as when an experience is more than the sum of its parts, inexplicably so.

The problem is not stories. The problem is stories used to sell us things, whether those are stories of “old-growth” tea at impossible prices or in impossible amounts, sometimes sold dishonestly, and at other times because the merchant is naïve or stories of how no tea trees are old and I’m the only honest person in the market willing to tell you so—therefore, buy from me. A good story over a nice cup of tea shared freely between friends, new or old, is a magical experience, and one that no tea lover should be without! But if the story is told in a shop when you are considering buying a tea, you’d be better to focus on your ability to evaluate the tea and drink the liquor, not the story. And that means you will have to gather some experience learning to taste the difference between regions, kinds of gardens, ages of trees and also ages of the tea itself. In *Jianghu*, only skill matters. But once you leave the market, invest the tea with love and joy and let go of the marketing, or tell another story that makes the session more enjoyable for you and your guests: maybe about the wonderful session you had under the Guardian Tree in Yunnan, just after sharing some Forest Bridge.



✿ This is a 2,700-year-old grandfather tree at the top of Ai Lao Mountain, near where Auntie Ai lives.



THE GLOBAL TEA HUT APP

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Hello Global Tea Hut members! As many of you are aware by now, the Global Tea Hut app is up and running and has already facilitated countless connections through tea and modern technology! It has been so inspiring these last two months to watch people create events and groups, submit pictures and videos, and interact in a really beautiful and responsible way through the feeds and other app features. Though there are some bugs to work out and improvements to be made within the app interface, the general feeling is that everyone praises this new medium for connection!

Praise for the App from Global Tea Hut Members

“Our shared experience is quite valuable. Even though we come from many different countries, cultures and tea practices, we are bound by this magazine and community. It’s our constant among the ever different lives we lead.”

–Ben Youngbaer

“I love being inspired by the tea photos and seeing how everyone celebrated their relationship with tea that day. I feel as if I am invited into their world and get to savor a sip with them as well.”

–Lee Ann Hilbrich

“I felt such a strong connection to the Global Tea Hut family from the moment I joined. I’ve connected with many fellow Chajin via other forms of social media and bonded over a shared love of tea and ceremony. The app takes it to a whole new level. Having a place just for our love of this practice is beautiful. Seeing everyone’s photos, hearing everyone’s stories and watching us connect in person warms my heart and reaffirms why I’m a part of this familial community.”

–Samantha Jones

“I get to talk to fellow Chajin everyday! I love that this app is putting all of us in contact with each other, all over the world—allowing us to get to know one another better, share our knowledge and experiences and even get together with Global Tea Hut members you didn’t know before!”

–Rich Allum

“The app is such a great step towards bringing the community together, getting a look at others’ tea-lives, sharing information and pictures, getting answers to all the questions you ever had, and best of all, finding other Chajin nearby to meet up for tea.”

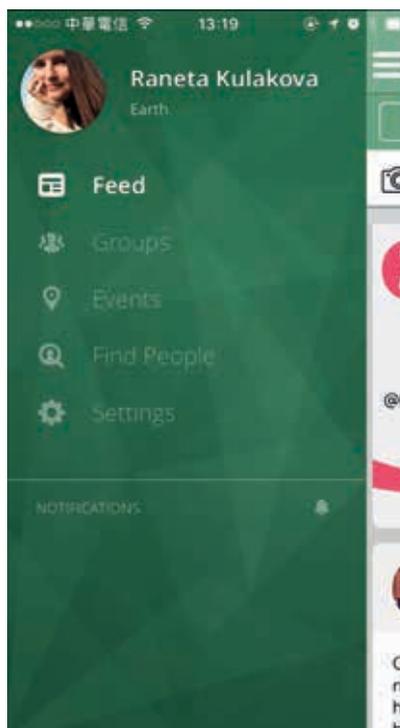
–Christopher Ringleb

“Getting a glimpse into the lives of Global Tea Hut members from around the world and how their lives are impacted by tea is what I enjoy most about the app.”

–Christopher Collins

We would love to have all Global Tea Hut members interacting through this new medium, so please read on and start connecting with thousands of other tea lovers like you!

The Global Tea Hut app is designed for your iPhone or Android and is a member-only private network, allowing Global Tea Hut members to interact and connect in a safe environment, free of Internet noise, advertisements and other online nonsense. Some of its features include feeds where you can post pictures, comments and videos; events where you can invite other members or join one yourself; and groups so you can engage with like-minded tea lovers! You can also play an “ice breaker” game (iced-tea breaker) to meet new members, start polls, follow other members’ posts and send private messages. You can search by location, name and interest, so whether you’re at home or on the road, you can always see other members near you. Don’t be shy here—this is what the app is all about! Reach out and invite someone over for tea. Though you may have never met before, you’ll already have so much in common as Global Tea Hut members, and nothing facilitates connection better than tea. Through tea, make friends! And through the app, share tea!



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茶 There is a live feed and groups, you can find people near or far and host or attend tea events in fifty countries around the world!

How to Download, Register & Create a Profile

You'll first need to download the app on your smartphone from the Apple store or Google Play. We also provided a QR download code as part of the June gift, which will redirect you to the appropriate download site. Once downloaded, you'll need to register a new account by typing in your email address and password. The password is: **teahut2017**. It's the same for all members. Please know that unless you are a Global Tea Hut member and we have verified your email address, you won't be able to register for the app using the password. This is part of what makes it a safe and private experience, and just one more great reason to sign up for Global Tea Hut!

Many members have multiple email addresses. We have first verified the email address associated with your Global Tea Hut subscription. If you would like to have a different one verified, please contact us at globalteahut@gmail.com.

After you've registered using your email address and password, you'll need to make a profile for yourself with a **new** password that will allow you to sign in securely from your smartphone. Because this is a member-only app, we're asking everyone to list their location when creating their profile, because one of the main features of this app is a search-by-location function that will facilitate more tea gatherings. Currently, if you turn off the location services on your smartphone, your location will show up as “Earth” on the Global Tea Hut app and members won't be able to search for you. You don't need to worry about draining your battery because under the **Global Tea Hut app settings**, you can change **location** to “**While using the app**,” which

means the app only uses your location when one of its features is visible on screen. We're currently working on alternatives to this because we understand not everyone has their location service on all the time.

After that, it's pretty straightforward! There's already lots of activity and a content-rich environment to search through. Post a comment and introduce yourself to the Global Tea Hut community, check out the already existing groups and events or start your own, see other members near you and search for those afar, or just enjoy the feed of beautiful comments and tea photography, liking them as you go along!

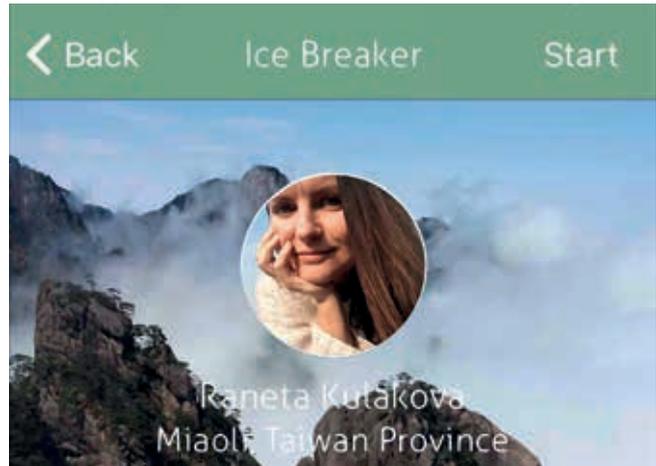
Desktop Options

We know not everyone in our community uses a smartphone, like Wu De, for example! There are options, however, to use this app from your desktop or laptop computer. It requires a simple software download, and you'll be able to use the app from your computer. An image of the app will be displayed on your monitor and you'll be able to navigate all the features with your cursor. It's pretty useful even if you have the phone app because typing is so much faster on a keyboard. There are a few different options online. We have tried Bluestacks and Arc Welder. While they are both a little buggy compared to the smartphone version, they definitely work well enough to really enjoy this app from your home computer or laptop. This should help some of you become more active on the app!

Plans for the Future

Since this app is very much in its beginning stages, we hope to continue refining it to create the best experience possible for our members. We have received lots of feedback on how to improve the app, and updates have already been made as a result. Please continue to let us know how you think things can be improved. There is even an app group within the app itself, where you can post questions or make suggestions. We know there is still a lot of room for improvement, and the app development team is eager to work with us on this.

Here is a list of some of the future upgrades planned so you have something to look forward to!



- 茶 Ability to reply to comments with photo attachments
- 茶 Nested replies instead of replies to the entire comment thread
- 茶 Editing/copying/pasting fixes in general
- 茶 Added profile feature showing availability to host tea
- 茶 Location search improvement
- 茶 Searchable posts
- 茶 Notification viewing improvement
- 茶 Reputation Points: a badge system to track people who are contributing



BONUS TEA!

As an incentive to increase member activity, we would like to offer some bonus teas to members who generate a lot of quality content on the app. Post a daily picture with an inspiring poem; do your best to answer user questions; generate meaningful groups, events or polls that get other members involved; or in any other way you see fit to add to this online community in a beautiful and loving way. We'll make our decisions as fairly as possible and send out some extra tea in your next Global Tea Hut envelope!

GLOBAL TEA HUT APP POLICY

We want to make sure everyone understands the Global Tea Hut policy for using the app, which is simple and very much in the same spirit that governs our magazine, Center and community:

- 1) Please be patient and kind, practicing noble speech, refraining from criticism, unless it is in the interest of growth.*
- 2) The Global Tea Hut app will be free of all endorsements, marketing or advertisements of any kind. You may not promote your products. This includes events that are for profit. (Donation-based ceremonies are permitted.)*
- 3) We would ask that you not write reviews of tea or teaware that you yourself sell. That said, you are permitted to use the app to trade tea and teaware, so long as it is trade and not for money. (We plan to create a forum to do so.)*
- 4) At all times, love each other and love Tea.*

*Thanks so much for your kindness
and tolerance!*

THE MAKING
OF A
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A lot of functional know-how goes into the creation of a ceramic kettle for tea, as this type of teaware needs to overcome several challenges in order to be aesthetically pleasing, have enough heat resistance to work on all the different kinds of stoves in the world, and, of course, most importantly, make nice water for tea. A window into this process helps us understand and appreciate our kettles that much more!

: **Petr Novak**

Kettles for boiling water are, without a doubt, one of the most important kinds of teaware. After all, what would our tea sessions be without boiled water? For me, as a potter with a sincere love for tea which informs my ceramic work, clay kettles have always been a central part of my work and practice. When I reach over and rest my hand on the handle of a nice kettle, I feel how quickly nice teaware becomes a friend, bringing us tea-joy. To a potter, these wares are also inspiration and creativity.

Ultimately, humans have made clay cookingware since prehistorical times. Despite all the advancements in ceramic production, technology and firing, making a kettle from clay is still a difficult task indeed, especially in a small, artistic ceramic studio like ours. Before I share our journey of failures and successes in making kettles, let me first discuss some of the details and difficulties that go into making a kettle in general. Even though this article contains technical language that may be dry, it may help you understand why potters struggle when making cookingware and give you a bit of insight into ceramic production, which is, of course, something all tea lovers are interested in.

Thermal Shock Resistance

Thermal shock resistance is an elusive and seemingly magical quality we try to achieve when creating heat-resistant ceramics. When you bring up this topic in conversation, most people are puzzled. Ceramicware is fired at really high temperatures: most utility wares are fired between 1,100–1,400 °C,

or even higher. So why can't such pieces survive the gas stove in our kitchen? The main reason is low thermal shock resistance. And the main troublemaker in the fired clay body is cristobalite, which is a crystalline form of silica. This forms spontaneously (within bodies) at temperatures above 1,100 °C (depending on the clay composition and firing schedule). Ordinarily, this form of silica has many benefits: it adds strength to our ware and helps to seal glazes to our pots. But cristobalite suddenly changes/increases its volume (around 0.8% change) at temperatures above 200 °C! Since ceramics are brittle, volume changes cause cracking. You might imagine that when the crystals inside the pot hit the 200 °C, they puff up a little bit like popcorn. They then shrink back down as they cool. Sooner or later, the pot gives up and releases this tension in a crack. How do we overcome this problem? There are three main options, and there are pros and cons to each of them.

Underfiring: This technique has been used for millennia, since the Neolithic era. As cristobalite is formed above 1,100 °C, potters sometimes fire cookingware at lower temperatures. Such pots are porous, fragile and can break easily. Before the invention of metal cookware, however, these underfired pots were used in kitchens all over the globe. Unfortunately, even when they are well-crafted, these wares usually weaken over time and start to leak. Our great-grandmas were using them daily. When these pots started to leak, they just found another use for them; as storage for grain or vegetables, for example. They then visited the local potter to commission or trade for a new one. In the world of kettles, the

Mulberry Creek stove and kettle sets from Chaozhou, which are one of the Four Treasures of gongfu tea, are classic examples. Japanese *bofura* for sencha are based on the Mulberry Creek stoves and kettles, and are, therefore, similarly made.

Cordierite: An extremely lightweight material with low thermal expansion and excellent strength, rigidity and thermal shock resistance. Even though cordierite is widely used in big factories to make kiln furniture, it is quite difficult to find, mix with clay and then fire to the right temperature. To develop its shock resistance, it requires a special firing schedule that takes it over 1300 °C. This is not easy to achieve in small studios and workshops. My guess is that many of the kettles that are suitable for gas and electric fires that you can find from bigger companies (such as Lin's, for example) are all produced in this or the following way.

Clays with the lowest amount of free silica possible: This means that little to no cristobalite will be formed during firing. There are some clays in the world that fit this bill, even in their natural state, prior to blending, but they are pretty rare. This means that such material has to be mixed from several minerals, types of clay and feldspars. Aside from a lot of testing to find the right recipe and firing curve, there are a few other problems with this method as well. Most glazes will not work on non-cristobalite clays (they crack or flake off), so special glazes have to be made to suit such clay. Also, the firing curve has to be very accurate—if you underfire even slightly, the pot will leak. If you overfire, on the other hand, the pot will collapse.

Nevertheless, despite all the challenges this technique brings, in my experience, searching and testing to create this kind of special mixture of clay and firing technique is usually the way most teaware artists solve the problem of thermal shock resistance.

So which of these three ways are we using to develop our kettles? Over the years, we have actually traveled down all three of these roads, finding several blind alleys, each filled with dozens of cracked, leaking or collapsed kettles...

Searching for Clay

When we started, we hoped that the easiest, good old-fashioned way of underfiring the kettles would work for

us, as it has for the most famous kettle makers in history. But we soon realized that such pots are fine for slow cooking in an oven or old-style wood/charcoal stove, but are not strong enough for gas fire or electric/infrared stoves. Also, when used without glaze, they leak and the water often tastes of clay. Some of you may have experienced this “clay water flavor” in lower quality Chaozhou Mulberry Creek kettles or Japanese *bofura*. Such an influence on the water can be nice with some water and tea, like rich and complex teas, such as aged puerh, but all too often it ruins most teas, especially delicate ones, like oolong. Therefore, we kept on our journey, searching for a better kettle solution. There had to be a way to make great kettles for tea lovers!

Eventually, we found a company offering cordierite clay, ready to use. This looked great! After experimenting with the right firing and designs, many tests later, we slowly started to produce kettles made from this clay. They produce quite nice water for tea, do not leak and the clay itself is nice to work with. However, after some time, a percentage of these kettles started cracking. A few kettles had been working for many, many sessions before they cracked, while others cracked very quickly. We were not sure why, but there was no cracking over a charcoal fire, so we started to realize that these kettles are only useful for those who are exclusively using charcoal for tea. The more martial heat of electric and gas burners may crack them. This may



have to do with the precision needed in firing this clay. You can see one of the first examples of this kind of ware at the Center. It is an antique already, from the days when this amazing Global Tea Hut magazine was just a few black and white pages and called a “newsletter!” Anyway, not all tea lovers can use charcoal, and even for those who use charcoal regularly, there is still a need to put one’s kettles on gas or electric stoves sometimes. Our aspiration to make kettles for everyday use, so people could have a nice tea session with convenience, was not yet satisfied, and so our kettle journey continued onwards...

After about two years, we again started intensively looking for an improvement in kettle design. Inspired

by a few recipes we found in ceramic books and online, combined with articles on this topic from several pottery magazines, we started blending, firing, testing and then blending again—over and over... A few months later, our first kettles were made and tested. Interestingly, at around the same time, we found a new supplier of clays for our regular work and there was a “flameproof” clay they offered in their catalogue. With a lot of skepticism, we gave it a try (we already had tried so many “flameproof” clays that didn’t prove effective). We were surprised to find that this commercially produced clay was very close to the best one we were mixing at home, after years of trial and error. As mixing clay is quite difficult on a small scale, with many practical

problems, it was logical for us to use this ready-to-go clay, especially since it was so close to ours. The problem was that this clay was a bit boring: pale white when fired unglazed, and, worse than that, the water prepared in these kettles was not that great for tea. We continued blending, adding iron oxide, iron scales, grog and other natural clays to achieve a clay that would not only survive any kind of heat, but also look nice and improve our water for tea. A great kettle should be pleasing aesthetically and also function well. It should have a nice effect on the water for tea, making each kettle sweet and adding depth and brightness to the tea we brew. This process of improvement is ever ongoing, as there is always room for growth!



茶 Bigger kettles with wider spouts, like the one on the left, work well for side-handle brewing, while the finer spout below will be appreciated in gongfu tea. The lively decorations on these bodies are the footprints of horsetail weeds from our garden. Such plants are put on the pots before closing the kiln for firing.



Points of Focus

Recently, one of our tea friends asked me what the main focus is when creating kettles. I started to explain our journey (as I have for you) of searching for a beautiful clay with thermal shock resistance. But I also realized that he was not just asking about the clay. What else is important when creating kettles? Some points are more subjective, as for example, aesthetic and visual touch, but some are more universal. Here are a few functional aspects of a kettle worth considering:

The spout: A bigger, more open spout is practical on a bigger kettle, especially when used for bigger tea settings and ceremonies, bowl tea or bigger sidehandle pots. But if you are looking for the perfect gongfu kettle, you will be after a more precise pour with good flow that is easy to control. So we focus on this when thinking about spouts. A spout is the most difficult part of a pot.

Handles: A good handle should give the kettle not just an aesthetic harmony, but also balance when pouring and handling the kettle. Our handles vary depending on size and shape of the pot. Some handles fit aesthetically and functionally on certain types and sizes of kettles, and not on others. The handle has a lot to do with the feel and pour of a kettle.

Lids: Over time, we've found that the lids on kettles have to fit right and also be heavier so steam will not lift them during a full boil. They also need to sit well when pouring.

Sieves: Kettles, unlike teapots, are often made without sieves inside the spout. But some tea lovers ask for a sieve for their smaller kettles, so they can boil tea or brew tea leaves directly in the kettle when necessary. Removing the sieve is better for the flow of the water and the pour is clearer, so a single hole is better for gongfu tea. Therefore, we keep this option just as a possibility for boiled tea kettles and the rest we keep simple, without a sieve.

Future Development

As I reflect on our kettle journeys today, I am quite confident that we are on the right track. Making kettles brings us joy, offering people the chance to improve their tea practice. But there are still many things to improve, consider and tune up. We are keeping in touch with the Chajin who use our new kettles, asking for feedback and criticism. One of the main problems is the vast variety of stoves, hotplates and braziers on the market today: From candles and alcohol burners to maintain temperature, to super fast professional infrared hot plates, it is difficult to promise that the particular clay will work on everything. In order to prevent future problems, we try to consult with the one commissioning the kettle, and meanwhile, try to create a kettle for every setting. It is challenging, but we are still devoted to the process of handmade clay kettles, created with a passion for clay and a love for tea. This is a living, growing adventure, and we are happy and grateful to be a part of it. Producing better kettles has not just improved my ceramic practice, but deepened my understanding of tea preparation, not to mention the joy of a good kettle to travel this path with.



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茶 Since kettles shouldn't draw the attention of our guests, we use natural clays with darker, calmer colors, as with this black kettle. Iron-rich slip is used to make the metallic surface, while the inside is left unglazed.



TeaWayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you, 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 Petr Novak.

I grew up in a place where tea was drunk in some form almost everywhere: it was a casual, daily beverage to everyone I knew. But my first real touch, I remember—the first seduction of the Leaf with all the magic behind it—was during my late teens at some post-hippie/rainbow festival. It was a colorful and wild event, but I spent the whole week sitting in one tent, watching a shaman mixing/boiling herbs (tea) and pouring them in cups and bowls for anyone who came. At least that was my romanticized idea of what happened. But no matter what really happened those many years ago, I have been hooked since.

I immediately started to look around for tea. It was during that time that tea houses were opening in Czech in every town and city, large or small, and tea was very popular. It was a great time for a teenager looking for his place in this world to discover tea. There was a tiny tea house nearby, and quite quickly, a group of people who hung around there become very close to me. We spent several evenings a week in that tearoom, each of us for different reasons: Enjoying new flavors and aromas, travelers' stories, exotic music, spiritual books and discussing our first meditation retreats. So many things have happened since those days...

Tea was never far away, and so, a couple of years later, when I fell as hard in love with clay, I was quite sure what I wanted to create: Teaware, of course! But even when you are sure what you want to do, it does not mean that you know how to go about it. To briefly summarize it: When I sat with clay for the first time, my aim was to give it a try and make a teapot. Twenty years later, I am still learning how to make that happen! In other words, I was naïve, but thanks to good teachers and a great deal of good karma, I stayed with Tea and clay for all these years. Now I think I know a little bit of what I am doing.

I like to think of myself as a rational, grounded person, but behind most of all the good things in my life, there are intuitive decisions that seem more spiritual. Is there a rational, intellectual reason why I have practiced tea for all this time? Yes, surely there is: She does me good and serves me right. But in all honesty, I feel that this rationale alone would not have sustained my interest in Her for so long. The attraction is subtler, playing with other parts of my heart and not just the intellectual side of life.

Back when I was little, there were fragrances of flowers and trees that were triggers for my imagination. Even now, when I put my nose deep in some wild flowers, it opens a particular internal landscape—emotions, images and so on. And from the start, I have had that same “thing” with Tea, more so than with any other plant. In the beginning, it was



茶人: Petr Novak

very often romantic. I remember the first sencha I drank: I became a samurai sitting on freshly cut grass. With my first shou puerh brick, I was hearing a throat-singing Tibetan monk. And those giant mountains in a flash came from Nepal with my first sip!

Later, I started to explore tea as much as possible, slowly becoming geekier than is probably healthy. I was trying to understand the history and processing of all kinds of teas I was meeting along the way. Tea is so deep, you can spend a few lifetimes trying unsuccessfully to become an expert. But when this “need to know” motion fades away, it leaves a space for more subtle growth.

When my first issue of Global Tea Hut was given to me by a dear friend, it was just a few black and white pages. A bit funny, but, hey—it was about Tea! And about Tea from a different perspective than I'd seen before: Dao and community. Is that not why I actually fell in love with Her in the first place? But who is that funny bearded American behind this? Four years later, and fifty magazines down the road, I am thankful for my intuition and for keeping my mind open, which has offered me the chance and honor to be a part of this growing, living community! I've learned so many things since, and so much has been given to me via Global Tea Hut. Tea keeps enriching my life and making me a better person.

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Yixing Teaware

茶道

茶主题: Shou Puerh

茶主题: Chajin Stories/Biographies

茶主题: Sidehandle pots



We are offering free tea to the most active members on the app. Please help us grow the app community by posting your tea sessions, questions and helping inform your tea family around the world!



Our app has launched! We have worked very hard on this project. Please use the app! Fill in your profile and engage the community so that it is a worthwhile addition to Global Tea Hut.



The live broadcasts are so much fun that we have added a second one each month. Now there will be the normal Q & A at the beginning of the month and another broadcast on the Tea of the Month later on!



The photo contest has almost finished. Be sure to send your submission quickly. There will be amazing prizes this year. Only one entry per person and even non-members can submit, so tell your friends!



Our Light Meets Life fundraiser teas and teaware are arriving. Keep an eye out on the website, as some of the special teaware we are making this year will be very limited, and most likely, will sell very fast. The teas are also very exciting!



Raise a bowl for Erika Houle and Gordon Arkenberg, who were married this June by Wu De in Connecticut. It was a gorgeous ceremony, full of tea spirit. We will share some photography soon!



Wu De will be in Spain for our annual retreat this October. Then, there will be events in the United States afterwards. Check the website for more details: <http://www.globalteahut.org/wudeteachings>

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 De 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 have switched to a ten-day course schedule at the Center, offering two per month. This is a great amount of time to get an immersive start in tea ceremony and will help the flow of the Center as well.



Connor Goss has moved to the Center to help serve. He is now in charge of scheduling, so when you email Tea Sage Hut, you will have the good fortune of corresponding with him, which is but one of the ways he is showing up. He is a lovely addition and his heartfelt service has already changed the energy of the Center.



We are going to host a seven-day tea course at the Center on tea and Qi Gong, starting on September 12th. (We changed to 7 days.)

August Affirmation

I am free to feel

Do I repress my emotions, not metabolizing my grief? Do I confuse the need to have equanimity towards emotions with a staunchness that prevents me from feeling? I am free to feel elated or grieve those I lose. I am free to cry fully.



www.globalteahut.org

The most purple-red 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
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