

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

February 2020

茶禪一味

ZEN & TEA



PART IV



EMPEROR'S COURT

This month we are continuing our tradition of exploring the relationship between Zen, meditation and tea. This is our fourth February devoted to Zen and tea. And, of course, we need a deep and meditative tea to drink while we explore their relationship, so we are all going to be drinking a late 1990s Gong Ting shou puerh.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

FEATURES

11 ZEN & TEA ONE FLAVOR OF TRUTH

By Wu De (無的)

21 HOW TO PRACTICE ZAZEN

By Wu De (無的)

25 2019 ZEN & TEA RETREAT

By Antonio Moreno, John Zapanta,
Aude Barras, Shen Su (聖素)

茶的日常

真實在碗裡

11



21



39



25



TRADITIONS

03 TEA OF THE MONTH

"Emperor's Court," Shou Puerh Tea,
Menghai, Yunnan

39 VOICES FROM THE HUT

"Yellow Mountain Bird Song"
By Antonio Moreno

45 TEAWAYFARER

John Johnson, USA

宮廷
帝王熟普



recycled & recyclable



Soy ink

© 2020 by Global Tea Hut
All rights reserved.

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

From the editor

In February, the weather here in Taiwan remains cool. We still head to the hot springs once a week. At home, we drink lots of shou, aged sheng and some traditionally-processed oolong like Cliff Tea or the Buddha's Palm on our website. If it is cool where you are, there is nothing like a warming tea session while it is chilly outside. I personally have been falling deeper in love with the shou tea we call "Shaman's Drum" this winter. It is a beautiful loose leaf shou with nothing blended in over time and very, very clean storage.

This year, there won't be any courses as the Center is closed, so we have been thinking of ways to continue providing content for the community. Of course, part of our aim is to rest and begin making moves towards building Light Meets Life. One of the ideas we are toying with is a series of online, video-based tea courses that can be purchased as stand-alone videos or with tea and teaware. We are hoping that some of you would share your thoughts about this project with us via email or on the app. Maybe you have some ideas to help us brainstorm the curriculum. We are thinking that we could complete level one and two this year. Our idea so far is to have ten to fifteen videos in each course, each video being fifteen minutes or so in duration with lots of practical and philosophical advice for beginning or deepening a tea practice at home. What do you think?

Unfortunately, we are going to postpone the Annual Trip until 2021. I will be going to sit a long, twenty- or thirty-day meditation retreat at that time, which has been a long time coming. We are all so grateful for your continued support through this transition and in giving us the space to catch our breath before this new project takes off in full force. It will be hard to let go of the trip, but we will have one next year for sure. I would love to hug all of you and share some tea, but for now, I need to meditate more.

Hopefully this year will bring lots of new and exciting adventures for us as a community, including a new Center. We can really use your help to promote Global Tea Hut the magazine and our tea and teaware online. You can also give via the GoFundMe website if you want to donate. We are working on a complete overhaul and transformation of the Global Tea Hut website as well. It feels both sad and great to sweep out energy and move into great transformation, personally and as a community. Every day, I realize more and more that the Hut is a community of tea brothers and sisters, not a "place." We are the Center. And we will find a new home eventually. May the tea love spread through every bowl you drink and those you serve as well!

This is one of my favorite traditions of Global Tea Hut: sharing Zen/meditation and Cha Dao each year. It also offers us the chance to discuss our annual Zen & Tea Retreat at the amazing and glorious Casa Cuadrau held in the Span-

ish Pyrenees every year. Casa Cuadrau is our sister center, and there is so much love and joy in sharing this annual event there. They are amazing people, and the center is located in one of the most gorgeous places I have ever been, with powerful mountains and stunningly silent Nature everywhere. The food and accommodations are held with love, and the space is as nourishing as the Nature all around. I cannot imagine my life without this annual retreat. And I love that it also gives us an excuse to devote an issue every year to one of my favorite topics: the relationship between Tea and Zen.

There is a profound and beautiful relationship between meditation and Tea. "Zen" is a translation of the Chinese word "*chan*, 禪," which is, in turn, the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit word "*dhyana*." A lot could be said about *dhyana*, but in its most succinct definition, it is literally the "meditative mind." Zen, therefore, is meditation, and meditation is Zen. And there is an old Chinese saying that "Zen and Tea are one flavor (茶禪一味)," which is another way of saying that Tea and meditation are the same. The relationship between the two is very, very old.

For the most part, it was through the monasteries that the mainstream culture of China was first introduced to tea. All tea mountains in China are or were home to great, historic monasteries. The monks and nuns moved there because there was tea or because it would be a good place to grow the tea they brought with them. Consequently, every tea tradition that has any longevity must, at some point, pass through the halls of Zen. Let's jump into another great annual issue exploring why tea and meditation have the same flavor!



—Further Reading—

This month, we recommend taking a look through the first three Zen & Tea issues, in February 2017, 2018 and 2019, to read a lot more about meditation and tea, including some advice for retreats at home or in your community. All past articles can be found in the archive section of our website.

TEA OF THE MONTH



ver the course of this month, we will be drinking a magical aged shou puerh. There is really nothing better than a thick, rich and creamy shou when the weather is cool. Shou (熟, ripe) puerh is puerh that has gone through a piling (*wo dui*, 渥堆) after production to artificially ferment the tea (“artificial” because it is induced by humans and to contrast it with the “natural” fermentation of sheng puerh that happens through aging). The tea is piled to about a meter and sprayed with water, covered with a thermal blanket and then rotated every so often to ferment it. The process is akin to composting and is the defining characteristic of shou puerh.

This magical tea is called “Gong Ting (宫廷)” shou puerh, which literally translates as “Emperor’s Court.” They say it is named this as it was one of the tribute teas (*gong cha*, 貢茶) sent to the court from Yunnan in dynastic times. Gong Ting puerh is made from all buds, making it sweeter and less astringent than most puerh. Traditionally, buds were considered higher quality, as they are harder to pick and often to process. All-bud puerh is rare. However, since the 1980s, most all Gong Ting puerh has been made into shou tea, as more mature leaves and/or a blend often make for better sheng. When piled, Gong Ting puerh is often creamier and sweeter than other types of shou. Sometimes this tea is also called “Silver Needle Golden Lotus (銀針金蓮花).” Since the early 2000s, most Gong Ting production has moved to plantations (*tai di cha*, 台地茶), which means agrochemicals and sometimes not even large-leaf tea trees. Small-leaf *Camellia sinensis* is easier to use when making Gong Ting, but the quality is vastly inferior. Our Tea of the Month comes from *Camellia asamica* trees from the Menghai region and is therefore full of breadth and life. It has the typical Menghai shou profile, for those of you who have some experience drinking aged loose leaf shou teas from back in the day. (This means it tastes like the classic shou blends the Menghai factory used to produce.)

In the olden days, the raw material (*maocha*, 毛茶) that arrived at factories was consistent, so the factory workers in charge of piling shou tea were able to create blends and match piling techniques to those blends through trial and error, finding the best pile depth and duration of piling to suit each blend. They could also add microbes from previous batches, keeping strains alive over time. Nowadays, *maocha* is expensive, and the raw material each factory gets changes each year, so most factories make shou out of whatever sheng is left at the end of the year—whatever didn’t sell, in other words. They often fully ferment the tea for forty-five to sixty days. Such fully-fermented shou is not really worth aging, though it is nice to leave it for ten to fifteen years so the piling flavors mellow out. Back in the day, however, piling never fully fermented the tea, which meant it also had room to age.

We aren’t sure how old our Tea of the Month is, but we know it is from the late 1990s. It is, therefore, an aged shou puerh, from the time when piling was done more skillfully. This means the twenty-something years have done more than mellow this tea out; they have changed it. The storage of this tea is mild, Taiwanese storage. It is not so wet as to greatly speed up the process, or leave strong storage flavors, but wet enough to make the tea taste more aged than it is.

The Emperor’s Court, or Gong Ting puerh is sweet and creamy. It is amongst our favorite shou teas, as it is so very sweet and thick. “Thickness” is, in fact, one of the categories used in the review of shou puerh teas we do for a local Chinese magazine. Good shou should have the consistency of milk. We also use the term “mellow” to describe good shou, which means that you cannot taste the piling flavor (*dui wei*, 堆味) in the tea. The age of this shou has more than mellowed it out. It is very full-bodied and robust, with many complex flavors. It has a wonderful grounding Qi. This tea is also very warming, which is great if you are in a cold part of the world.



Emperor's Court



Menghai, Yunnan



Shou Puerh Tea



Dai Aboriginals



~1,200 Meters



宫廷



Emperor's Court Brewing Guide

側把壺泡法導引

SIDEHANDLE





We often will not include the bowls in a ceremony, leaves in a bowl or sidehandle. A *chaxi* can be much cleaner without them. We bow to the guests and bring out the bowls one by one, starting with our guests and setting our bowl out last. Bring each bowl to your heart, and then place them one by one in front of your pot. Be as mindful as possible. Remember, a ceremony is to turn attention into intention. After all the bowls are set out, you can take a breath, lift the kettle and place some water in each bowl. Then, pour some hot water into the sidehandle pot itself to purify it. At this point, we gently bring out the wastewater container (*jian shui*, 建水).

To rinse the bowls, you follow the same method as in a leaves in a bowl ceremony we reviewed last issue. The off-hand is like the fork of a bicycle wheel. It is extended straight and does not move (this is important as your washing will be fumbling and awkward if you try to coordinate the movement of both hands). Extend the off-hand, with the fingers straight and unbent, to allow free, circular rotation of the bowl. Hold the bowl over the *jian shui* at a forty-five-degree angle and rotate it towards yourself with the strong hand (we also expel wastewater towards ourselves to honor our guests). The aim of this circular movement is to rinse off/purify the inside and outer rim of the bowl, where your guests' mouths will touch. You will have to practice the angle and speed of the rotation—if you move too fast, the water will spill out without rolling over the lip of the bowl and purifying the outer rim; and if you go too slow, the water will roll down the side of the bowl and burn your hand. You will know when you have rinsed the bowl all around completely, as you will feel a wetness on the inside of your thumb.

At this point, put the palm of the off-hand into the curve of the bowl and use the strong hand to shake the bowl three times, removing any excess water. It is a good idea to reach down and wipe your hands off with a tea cloth (*cha jing*, 茶巾) before grabbing the handle of the pot. Then, decant the rinse water from the pot into the *jian shui*.

Next, we add the tea to the pot using a scoop or “*cha he* (茶合).” Take a moment to place your hand over the tea and “whisper” your good intentions from your heart through your hand to the tea. Silently ask that this tea remind us of Nature, of the preciousness of this occasion and of our love for one another. Face your scoop towards your guests, pouring the tea into the pot away from yourself. Ideally this is straight, but some pots, like the one shown here, require a slight angle.

Take a breath and calm yourself. Lift the lid and pour the water into the pot. Pour in circular motions at least until the water is above the leaves, so as to not scald any one leaf too much. When the pot is full, replace the lid and steep the tea. Take another breath before lifting the pot to decant the tea for your guests. Move in circular movements around the edges of the bowl. Bubbles make tea astringent and rough. We should pour smoothly in figure-eights around the row of bowls, back and forth until all the tea is decanted. Then, gently replace the pot. Sometimes, with some sidehandle pots, you may have to rotate the handle around to make sure it isn't in your way.

The first bowl is an important one. For this first bowl, we bring each bowl to our heart, cover it with one hand and make eye contact with the guest it is for, offering them a warm smile of welcome. Do this for each guest, one at a time as you hand them their bowls. For a lot of people, a silent tea ceremony can be intense and heavy. They resist the silence and connection with presence as it goes against the grain of their busy lives and active minds. They grow bored and feel that the situation is overbearing. By connecting to each guest at the beginning with a heartfelt smile, we have found that the silence of a tea session is magically alchemized into joyful silence. We aren't sure of all the mysteries of why this happens, but it certainly works. The rest of the session will flow much smoother and happier for you and your guests due to this one simple gesture of love!

When you hand out each bowl, rotate the wrist outward—offering the part of the bowl your hand is not touching to each of your guests. We do this for every steeping. It is another of the many ways we honor our guests, opening the Universe that they can touch in each and every bowl!

After each bowl, return the bowls to the center. It helps to keep your bowl on the far side of your strong hand and place each consecutive bowl in order so you don't lose track of whose bowls are whose. The bowls then come and go, steeping after steeping. This is the breath of a tea ceremony and the essence of its spirit: we are one (one gathering, one heart and one moment), and we are also apart (individuals with unique journeys).

幸福眼務
方法是當下





The traditional way to hold a sidehandle is to use the bottom three fingers to wrap around the handle, the thumb for support underneath and the index finger on the button/pearl. We have more Qi in our index finger than any other, which means more control over it. It is the most powerful of our fingers. If you extend your arm straight out in front of you, with your wrist slightly bent up, and then extend your index finger, you will feel the control and power you have down from the elbow, through the arm and wrist to the hand and finger. Pots made for this traditional style of brewing will have more space between the spout and handle, and usually have straighter handles. An angled handle works better with our ceremony. Holding the pot in the traditional way creates more balance, grace and fluidity. In both forward and backward movements down a row of bowls, you can rotate the pot inwards or outwards around the rims of the bowls, as you need.

A proper ceremony must have a completion. Without it, your guests will still feel like they are in ceremonial space even after they leave, which will make it hard for them to go about their day and concentrate on whatever comes next. The oldest and simplest way to end a tea ceremony of any kind is with a bowl or cup of clear water, which represents a washing away of the ceremony—celebrating the precious impermanence of the occasion.

After your guests leave, take a few minutes to sit in the space. Tea ceremonies are very intimate, and getting up immediately does not honor the grace that has just happened. We also like to think of each of our guests one by one, wishing them well on their journeys and hoping that the ceremony we just shared in brightens their day.

Finally, always leave time to clean up. Just as we clean before a session, failing to do so afterwards dishonors the occasion and our teaware—the instruments of our Dao and of our Tea-Joy. If you have somewhere to be, make sure you always leave adequate time to clean up your tea session, leaving no trace of what just happened. Cleaning is most of our practice of Cha Dao: cleaning outside and inside. We purify our hearts to be better servants of Tea and of the Nature she speaks for; and we purify our space and our ceremonial instruments so that they reflect the purity we hope to inspire in our guests. This is a part of learning to honor the occasion and rest in a graceful and loving relationship with impermanence. This is the moment at which the ceremony circles in on itself, returning to empty stillness.

Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

This month's tea is a very strong shou puerh. It will have to be brewed in a pot, so the choices are sidehandle or gongfu. You can have a nice ceremonial session with a sidehandle, and the Emperor's Court will provide a deep and meditative space. However, if you want to bring the best out of this tea, you should brew it gongfu. The choices are really open with this tea, and to do with the focus of your session: if you want to rest in meditative, ceremonial space then sidehandle, but if you want to appreciate this tea, then gongfu is certainly the choice for you.

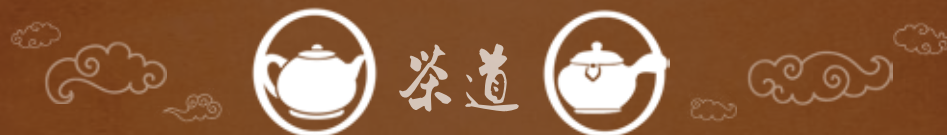
With this month's tea, quantity is going to be very important. If you use too much Gong Ting tea, the liquor may be too thick, as it gets very thick quickly. However, shou is nice when it is thick and rich, so we also don't want to put too little, making this very much a Goldilocks tea. For many teas, a general rule of thumb is to cover the bottom to the extent that it is covered but you can still see the bottom of the pot. There are exceptions to any and every rule, but that is a helpful generality. This tea is an exception, as most shou teas are, in that we should cover the bottom like the first autumn leaves and then add another healthy pinch. For most pots, that will get you the right amount. It is always better to err on the side of too little tea, as you can always add more, than to put too much which is difficult to take out and will be wasted.

Temperature will be important as well. If you are brewing sidehandle, you can let go of the brewing parameters for the most part and focus on adhering to the ceremonial method (*temae*) and create a mindful, peaceful and meditative space. If you are brewing gongfu, however, heat will be essential for a tea like this. This can be facilitated best by using charcoal to heat your water. If you have to use electric heat, then use an infrared stove if possible, as it is the best type of electric stove we have found. Gas can also be nice, as it boils the water quickly. We suggest sticking to one of these three heat sources, though you can also use alcohol to maintain temperature on a clay kettle once it is boiled.

You can also preserve the heat by showering in gongfu tea. Showering the pot brings the magic of Yixing zisha clay to life, opening the pores and preserving the heat from steeping to steeping, which allows the tea to slowly release its essence. Your session will then be more "patient (*nai pao*, 耐泡)," which means you will get many more steepings than if you weren't showering. Of course, proper gongfu brewing will be much more patient than a sidehandle session, but that is not the focus of bowl tea anyway.

A glass kettle is a great way to learn about water temperature, as you can see the bubbles and then begin to correlate different temperatures to sounds and vibrations in the handles. They are a very affordable way to learn about water temperature and can then be put to other uses later on, like for boiling spent leaves which can be a lot of fun.

We suggest learning the amount of tea, the temperature and the steeping time through trial and error and lots of experience. This develops tea brewing as a skill, as opposed to someone else's recipe. Know your tea, your teaware and your brewing. That is gongfu, which literally means "mastery through self-discipline." As we practice, and learn from our mistakes, we get to know our teas and teaware. Then we get to know genres and types of tea and how to adapt new teas to our system when they arrive. This is the way real skill is slowly and organically grown with practice. There are no mistakes if you learn from them—only lessons!



Gongfu

Sidehandle

Water: spring water or best bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: very hot, fish-eye, roughly 95-98 °C

Brewing Methods: gongfu or sidehandle (both are great)

Steeping: longer, flash, flash, then growing (especially when brewing gongfu)

Patience: 15-25 steepings gongfu

茶 Amount will be very important with this month's tea. We want shou to be rich and creamy, but it's easy to overdo, since this shou is all buds. Put a bit less than usual for shou.



茶禪
啜口真實

Zen & Tea

ONE FLAVOR OF TRUTH

茶人: Wu De (無的)



Understanding Zen & Tea

領會禪和茶

Zen orients towards the practical. It isn't necessarily about achieving enlightened states, though that can be a part of it. Zen is about living well in the moment, directly and truly. There is a lot of Buddhist philosophy to study, from Theravada to Tantric schools, all of which is helpful in developing an intellectual understanding of Zen and to inspiring us to work harder, cultivating devotion and gratitude for all the past masters that have handed down their wisdom to us. These are good tools on the path. And there are also many rites and rituals, prayers and chanting in Zen temples, which can help open the heart and let in the Mystery. But none of that is Zen! Those are just parts of a Buddhist expression of Zen. Zen is the meditative mind. It is the place where reality meets our beings, and as such, it is ineffable and radiantly irrational. You cannot understand it, though you can experience it—like a cup of tea! It is present, and therefore too ephemeral to catch with the mind. Zen is like the wind—you grab a fistful only to open your hand and take a look at nothing.

Zen masters spout illogical riddles, sounds or whack our shoulders with sticks as signals to drop the mind in the moment, here and now. You can experience a whack on the shoulder, but you cannot understand it—not in the moment, not as it is happening. If you are thinking when it happens, your mind either stops when the stick (*keisaku*) strikes or you miss part of the experience. In fact, the stick is even hard to understand afterwards, when we have plenty of time to contemplate its purpose. This is especially true when the strike was not punitive but random, the way that life often smacks

us without rhyme or reason. Set aside your feelings about *keisaku* and striking meditators to inspire vigilance, or the part of you that wants to dismiss Zen riddles (*koan*) as gibberish. The wisdom is not in figuring some secret out or developing understanding through the contemplation of an answer—the answer to the stick or a *koan* is a state of mind.

In fact, many *koans* follow a formula where the student asks the master what she thinks about X because the student thinks Y. The master tells the student that Y is wrong (or, in some cases, says it is 20% wrong), to which the student then questions what is right. The master then flatly says “Y”—the same answer the student started with. The point is that the answer was wrong when you said it (or only 80% correct) and fully right when the master says it. This means that the mind that answers is more important than the answer.

I started this article by saying that Zen is practical, and then immediately fell into a hole of ideas, philosophy, words and concepts that were all trying to make sense of something that needn't have any sense. Alas, words are always constricted thus. So long as we are confined to this article—you as the reader and me as the author—we will have to make use of words and concepts to try to guide and inspire a Dao, a Way of life. But none of what I have to say about Zen, Tea and their relationship to each other will make any sense until you begin to practice. Otherwise, some portion of my efforts will also be nonsense. (I'll remain the Mad Hatter, hosting my crazy Zen tea parties.) A cup of tea makes no sense. It is not rational or irrational. *It just is.*

I want to discuss some of the ways that seated meditation (*Zazen*, 坐禪) and tea (*Cha Dao*, 茶道) can work together to offer a direct, practical and very real change in our outlook: our experience of reality from moment to moment and the way we interpret sensory data. These practices together offer an opportunity for peace and balance, living beauty, ethical integrity and an intimacy with Nature. Let's discuss each of these areas in turn, hopefully inspiring some of you to begin a seated meditation and tea ceremony practice or deepening your practice if you have already begun.

Peace & Balance

In order to find peace and balance, we must first understand a bit about our human experience, at first intellectually through discussions like this, but then, more importantly, through self-observation, finding truth by observing your own life. Obviously, the world and human beings' experience of it are very complex, and we can explore whole sections of libraries devoted to philosophical breakdowns of the human experience. However, I want to keep things simple here, as we are, in the end, only inspiring and understanding in terms of practical applications. For that reason, let's think about dividing our experience here on Earth into two aspects: the mind and the senses.

In traditional Indian philosophy, the mind was considered an independent sense organ, which is logical because it can indeed be stimulated independent of the other sense organs. But for our map, let's keep them separate.





Let's think of the world of the mind, or spirit if you will, as one aspect of our internal world and our sensory data, which is a somewhat skewed interpretation of what is happening objectively outside of us. When we utilize technology in conjunction with our senses, recording and testing, we can use the scientific method to get a mental understanding of what is happening in the universe, as well as the abstract laws that events follow. This is a movement of sensory data into the mind—the material into the mental/spiritual.

Let's think of the spiritual as the mind, the feelings, intuitions and all of the aspects of our internal landscape that sometimes have a basis in our sensory experience of the world, but often are fantastical—rolling in the past or future, or even creating fantasies. The material, then, is what we learn about objective reality when we control our sensory data with proper, rigorous analysis and scientific method, developing an understanding of the world, both directly through experimenting

on it, and abstractly through understanding its laws over the course of many tests.

Oftentimes, individuals, and societies, promote this distinction and value one of these aspects of our lives over the other. Some of us value only the spirit, dismissing the material, while others dismiss the mindmade worlds inside of us and “myths,” relying completely on what can be objectively verified by the senses (hopefully combined with scientific rigor, since the senses alone are easily manipulated and often horribly inaccurate). There are issues with either of these approaches.

The problem with an over-reliance on materialism and scientific maps is that they ignore the whole internal landscape, and by necessity must. The internal, subjective, spiritual world has no place in science. It skews the results. It is far too subjective. However, this internal world is a huge part of what it means to be human. You cannot ignore the impact it has on our well-being. Without it, we are just bodies,

and life can grow terribly pointless and meaningless very quickly. Everything grows meaningless over time.

Alternatively, as the Buddha himself learned, an overemphasis on spiritual, idealistic states and ideas, neglecting the realities of the body, is not a very good way to survive and keep practicing. Also, one needs a brain and a body to have a spiritual life.

The fact is that reality is beyond either of these understandings. Reality is beyond the human mind. There is no limit to what we can understand as we advance what we can experience with greater technology, but there is also no limit to the expanding world, the sum total of which will always and forever stay beyond what we can know or experience. One must accept mystery, come to terms with it and relate to it in a healthy way if one is to find peace and balance in this life. Life is not just a bucket of atoms, chemicals and “stuff,” nor is it a spiritual world devoid of form. It is something beyond these concepts.



Actually, this discussion has very important and practical applications. If you observe your own experience in life, you will see that in any day, week, month or year, your life is often lost in the mind and its fantastical worlds, driven by its desires to “possess” or “own” objects, experiences or knowledge. And then more sensually-driven times, where you are exploring the world with your body, learning how it works or seeking physical pleasure while trying to avoid discomfort. But then there are those rare times where the body, mind and spirit are all aligned and focused in one activity—one moment of here and now.

Those moments beyond the idealistic and material, beyond the senses and the mind, are the places where we find Zen. Through a combination of seated meditation every morning and evening and the expression of the mind cultivated on the cushion through a structured tea ceremony, we can find the balance of mind. In that space, peace also thrives and all the world is there,

awake and alive—mind, spirit and senses as one. This is a space that athletes, artists and even warriors have all sought towards an end (of creation or success), but in Zen we seek this state for its own sake. We seek to live from that center.

Tea as the Bridge

Perhaps we can now bring tea fully into the picture, as it can indeed help facilitate the balance achieved in seated meditation by focusing it on an activity that is also done for its own sake. Tea is, after all, literally a way of channeling the spirit into the senses.

Combined with seated meditation, which is passive, we create an active space to move the body. In this way, we develop a holistic alignment, both passively and actively, of the mind and senses. When the channels are all clear and open, this can proceed naturally and gracefully without any need for imposition. However, until balance

becomes a way of life, as opposed to something we are striving for, we will need method.

In seated meditation, one must have an object of focus. After some years of practice, one can learn to “just sit (*shikantaza*),” but doing so in the beginning will just result in an hour of wandering mind with no presence to speak of. Even after years of seated meditation, sitting without a method isn’t great every day. Some days, when the mind is ruffled, it is good to focus on a meditation technique. For that reason, we use the breath, a *mantra*, counting or other meditative device to slow the mind down and focus it on the present moment. This is essential. There are arguments about which meditation technique is best, but really I think that there is no “best,” only what is best *for certain people*. It is like medicine, which is also better when it is paired with the individual’s constitution. In the end if a technique works, then it works. By “works,” I mean that one grows more present and awake.

Similarly, there is a time and a place for free, unconstrained tea, but without method (called “*temae*” in Japanese), there is no branch to return to, nothing to bring you back to the present and nothing to align the mind to. The methods return us to the present and focus the mind and body to the ineffable, non-conceptual place beyond matter and spirit where there is no thinking about doing, no senses, just the moment, the “zone.”

Following a ceremonial method also has two other functions, beyond just anchoring action to the present moment. It opens channels in our body, which not only improve the way we make tea but start to change our daily lives as well. Also, following ceremonial methods that have been grooved in long before we were born connects us to a lineage of tea masters who all made tea this way. Finally, there are often subtle practical and very helpful movements built into the ceremonies that one won’t realize until one has trained for some time. You may realize one day, for example, that moving just so prevents your elbow from ever bumping a particular piece

of teaware and see the genius in the traditional movements.

In the West, we often confuse freedom for doing whatever one wishes, which is often just slavery to whatever impulse arises in you. True freedom is doing wholly and completely what you must—your Dao. Little children dance very freely, but so does the master. She is free and powerfully trained. Training empowers freedom; it doesn’t limit it.

Through daily seated meditation, morning and evening, and a tea ceremony, one can find the natural balance that comes when the mind/spirit and body/senses are aligned in truth, harmonized with Nature. The more we live from that space, the more our actions will be en-Dao-ed with the great Dao’s force and energy. Our way will be the Way...

A Beauty Lived

Tea is living beauty. A Chajin creates beautiful space wherever she goes. She strives to purify the senses, rather than seeking pleasure in them. This is a subtle, but very important point. A

desirous heart craves pleasant flavors, smells and sounds to escape pain or in addiction to pleasure. The Chajin is not chasing pleasure. Pleasure is ephemeral. The senses can be cleansed by tea, by incense and the right music. This is very different than an attached craving for pleasant flavors. And this is the difference between a sterile, “possession” beauty and a living beauty. You cannot own the beauty of a sunset, a flower or a gorgeous smile. They are not ownable. Nor can they fulfill you. No amount of sensual pleasure will make you more alive than you are.

Another way of saying this is that we are not meant to grope around in our senses as a subject gathering objects/experiences. We are not meant to seek fulfillment in our senses, but rather to find fulfillment in our hearts and then celebrate that fulfillment through the senses. In other words, the living beauty of the Chajin is an outward expression, not a clingy movement of gathering nice flavors, aromas, sounds and sights to escape or cover over pain. We are not trying to pass time idly, but to celebrate the creative essence that is our spirit, made in the likeness of the



Divine, to make beauty through our senses, filling our environments with beautiful teas, teaware, incense and music because our hearts are overflowing with this. In this way, the aesthetic of tea will stay simple, clean and unadorned/unostentatious, and the experiences we have in tea ceremony will cleanse the palate, the nose, the eyes, the ears, and, most importantly, the heart.

Like the emperor who trapped the nightingale because he loved its song, only to find that it would not sing when caged, beauty must be lived, not possessed. The attempts we make to possess beauty make it ugly. Cha Dao is living beauty.

Intimacy

Peace and balance are commensurate with clarity. It is what Dogen called the “true dharma eye,” which is seeing clearly and truly, that brings peace and balance. The Buddha acknowledged that the past was a construct of the mind and the future, with all our hopes and dreams, is but a fantasy. Reality is always in the present moment. One could view the past as determined by materialism, while the future is the open-ended realm of the idealistic spirit. But once again, reality transcends them both, living only in the eternal Now.

We think about time as a line moving from the past to the future, but this is just a way of thinking. If you line up many here-now points and look at them abstractly, it looks like a line. But in reality, there is only this moment. What I am calling intimacy here is direct acting, the way that our nervous system makes countless instantaneous responses in each moment based on internal and external sensory data. This is the athlete’s zone, where she ever so slightly shifts weight to her back foot in complete concordance with the direct moment. In Chinese this way of direct, intimate acting is called “*wu wei*, (無為).” It is our natural state. It is not something above or extra added on to our experience. As Alan Watts often said, in many religions there is an attempt to add divine thoughts and prayers to the act of chopping potatoes, but in Zen we just chop potatoes.

Actually, presence, clarity and direct intimacy with the real moment is not something extra, the thoughts we have about the world and our experiences are the true “extra,” and they are misleading us from our intimacy with our lives. We are way too busy, and all this internal dialogue, filling every moment of peace and clarity with mental chatter, makes it seem like our conceptual interpretation of time as a line from past to future is real, when in fact it is causing us to lose our ability to discern the difference between mental constructs and the real world. When we make space for seated meditation and tea ceremony, we regain our clarity of direct experience again. We return home—to the real world of the present moment.

The present moment is always direct. It is too momentary to contemplate, theorize or philosophize about. It is ineffable and non-conceptual. You cannot “know” or “understand” the present moment. You can experience it directly, though. That direct experience is intimacy, clarity, truth, peace and light—Zen.

Our thoughts about our lives must, of course, exaggerate linear time, because the present moment, here and now, is beyond consideration. The moment cannot be grasped by the mind; it is too fleeting. It is natural to remember and plan for the future, but we have allowed our dreams, desires, memories and fantasies to make so much noise that we cannot see reality anymore. Of course, this constantly shifting mental landscape, moving from past to future to fantasies, is full of conflict and confusion.

When we act directly and truly, aligned mind and body in *wu wei*, the separation between subject and object disappears. There is no foreground and background, just pure present experience. Paradoxically, even healthy remembrance or planning for the future can happen in this way—full of presence. Seated meditation and tea ceremony together help facilitate the space for presence and clarity to awaken, to restore and return to a more healthy influence in our lives. We can then act directly and truly and the confusions of our mindmade worlds are immediately lifted, as they are mere projections. You cannot solve the problems of a character projected onto a screen, but you

can shut the projector off and see the wall for what it is. In seeing with the “true dharma eye,” the antics of the characters on the screen no longer hold sway if and when the projector comes back on and the movie starts again. Zazen and Cha Dao are the shutting off of the projector.

We are all so used to adding on to our lives—experiencing and knowing more, more, more—but what we really need is less. When we let go, we can return to a natural state of our true selves. As the Old Man says, “The Dao is a returning.”

Moral Integrity

Dogen said that the Buddhist way is to stop misdeeds. He sometimes used slang, which modern authors have translated as “Don’t be a jerk,” which actually isn’t that far off. The problem with morals is that they are also theories—ideas. In the present moment, directly and truly beyond mind, there is no time to contemplate what is skillful/wholesome/healthy behavior and what is unskillful/unwholesome/unhealthy action. (Buddha didn’t teach sin, merely unhealthy misdeeds.)

Any of us who have tried to keep precepts know that it is impossible. “The road to Hell is paved with good intentions,” as they say. No matter how much we wish to abstain from unwholesome deeds and do good, in the moment we are overwhelmed by the moment itself. There is no time for moral contemplation or adjustment. This does not mean that taking moral inventory of our past and committing to do good deeds and abstain from misdeeds in the future is a waste of time; it is not. Precepts are useful as inspiration and guidance, especially after the fact in contemplation of our mistakes from a perspective of learning and in planning for a brighter, better future. But in reality—in the truth of the present moment—they are useless. Also, philosophical systems of ethics can very quickly descend into dogmatic judgment of ourselves and others, which is incredibly inimical to spiritual progress, which is why most masters warned against it (avoiding such judgment is two of the “Ten Grave Precepts” in Zen Buddhism).

Aside from reflecting on our past behavior to learn from our mistakes and committing to a healthier future, the best thing we can do is, once again, to practice seated meditation and tea ceremony, learning to make space in our lives for the present moment awareness. With presence comes clarity, and with clarity peace. The more our mind dwells in the present moment, peaceful and awake, the more our actions will be in concordance with the Dao, and therefore *always* skillful, wholesome and healthy. And that is why the Buddha emphasized the purification of the mind and senses, as that is the only true and real method for abstaining from unwholesome deeds and performing wholesome ones.

In the real moment, as lived directly and truly, the subject and object vanish and reality is one. In such a space, the truth is connection and harmony. In connection, all things nourish everything else. Compassion can then be lived, in the true realization that your happiness is my environment, *is me*, and is, therefore, my happiness. This is also not a philosophy, but a direct experience. Dogen compared such true compassion to fluffing your pillow in deep sleep—such a kindness happens naturally, effortlessly and without any concepts when you are whole.

Zen & the Truth

You can't really measure your Zen in any given moment, because you would lose your presence by doing so. When the performer wonders what the audience is thinking, she spoils her performance. You have to be fully involved for the moment. So you can only measure the effects of Zen over time, looking back on behavior patterns, like the way you respond to challenges for example, the way you live and express beauty versus trying to possess it and the over balance of your being as you start to hover closer to the balance of the universe.

It is important that we don't turn these teachings, this article or the ideas it points to into another philosophy. These teachings only make sense when they are applied. And what does that look like? It is daily seated meditation in the morning and evening and a tea

ceremony a day as well. I know you are reading this now and wondering where you will ever find the time, but that is the mind seeing time as a line from past to future. You find the time *now*.

There is an old Zen saying that one should meditate twenty minutes in the morning and evening, unless you find that you don't have the time, in which case you should meditate *an hour* in the morning and evening! The "too much to do and too little time" mind-set is literally the source of stress. In fact, that could be a definition of stress. What's more, the "too much to do and too little time" mind is also *incredibly inefficient*. It doesn't get things done; it gets in the way of getting things done. When we make space for peace and clarity, we make space for intimacy and direct relationship to reality. From such a mind, our actions are more powerful, decisive and efficient. *Meditators get way more done!* But don't take my word for it—give it a try: find a method of Zazen to practice morning and evening (try for an hour if you can) and a method of tea ceremony (*temae*) to practice once a day as well. Then see what happens when you apply the meditative mind to your work and life outside of these activities...



*The tides of the world
Make waves of our desires
Drifting to and fro
There is no peaceful shore
Living by Vow
The winds pick up
And carry us through
to the white beaches of Penglai*

—Wu De





How to Practice Zazen

如何練習坐禪

A seated meditation practice can change your life and all your tea. More than the water, the tea, teaware or brewing method, the mind of the brewer affects the tea. As an experiment, you may want to try switching brewers halfway through a session and see how very much the brewer affects the tea, even with the same tea, water and utensils. Fine tea comes out of a still and peaceful mind. Beyond just preparation, the quieter more peaceful mind is also much more sensitive, which means that a meditator experiences more when drinking tea—more flavors, aroma, energy and depth. Tea rewards a quiet mind with more experience. And so, a seated meditation practice not only improves our well-being and overall health, it also will improve our ability to prepare and appreciate tea. The more we integrate Zazen into our life, the better tea we will make and the more we will be able to appreciate our tea as well. Cha Dao and Zazen are truly one flavor.

Aside from improving our tea, modern research has shown that over years meditation actually changes the brain structure, proving that the positive influence of a daily meditation practice are not just placebo, but real and functional. Nonetheless, in Zen we try to steer clear of goal-oriented practice. When we meditate in order to make better tea or be more peaceful and healthy, we miss the present moment and bring our “not now but later” mind into the meditative space, filling this space with desire as well. For that reason, it can be very helpful to take up an orientation that Zazen is done for its own sake, not to achieve any state.

Goalless meditation also brings to light a very important point, which is that it is very dangerous to evaluate meditation. Every session of meditation should be like Vegas: what happens on the cushion stays on the

cushion. It is best to avoid comparing meditation sessions or assessing them in any way. A meditation session is not “bad” because your mind was wandering, nor was it “good” because you were peaceful. There is no “good” or “bad” in this space. In fact, if you force me gun-to-head to evaluate your meditation as a meditation teacher, I would first warn that evaluation is dangerous and then I would probably rate the stormy, mind-filled session with a higher grade than the peaceful, still one. I know that seems contradictory, but when you think about it, sitting when everything is peaceful and calm is not much of a skill. That is like saying “I am peaceful and happy when I am on vacation in Bali.” Of course you are—everyone is. But not everyone can hold a storm, maintaining a peaceful posture through mental and/or emotional upheaval. Such a person is developing strength that will be powerful in life. Still, better to let go of goals in meditation and just sit! Zazen is Zazen, not a gateway to something else.

It is important to note that from the other direction, Zazen is not an ascetic practice either. We are not seeking discomfort, reveling in it or even channeling it. We are learning to be present onto what is, rather than seeking or avoiding anything.

Finally, before offering some meditation advice, we want to point out that there are many techniques of meditation in this world, and we feel that like medicine, there is no best way, just what is best for you. We are not presenting this technique as the “best,” but rather as best for us. If you already practice a different technique, continue to do so. All meditation is wonderful and helpful in life and in Cha Dao. Zen and Tea are one flavor, after all. But for those of you who could use a bit of instruction, here are some tools for beginning or deepening your meditation practice.

What You Need

We don't think there is a specific meditation cushion that is better than any other. Traditionally we use a *zabuton*, which is a square cushion, with a *zafu* on top (a round cushion for your bum). Choose a cushion that is comfortable for you. Don't expect that all your meditation sessions will be free of physical discomfort, though. No number of cushions will save you from some pains in your legs and back, often because we are not accustomed to a meditative posture. Try to wear clean and comfortable clothes that are loose-fitting and made of natural fibers.

You may also want to bring a timer along. Try working up to an hour of practice in the morning and an hour in the evening before bed. You can start with less, and slowly increase your meditation sessions over time. We would recommend starting with at least twenty minutes twice a day.

Posture

Posture is meditation, and meditation is posture. Posture is everything in meditation. The ideal posture for meditation is, of course, full lotus. When done properly, all tension is taken off the ankles, hips and knees, allowing for long sessions. This posture also changes the energetics of our body, allowing the Qi to flow in a meditative way. If you cannot sit in full lotus, then try half lotus, Burmese style sitting or even just sitting cross-legged. If you have had an injury, you can sit *seiza* with your knees tucked under (with or without a wooden bench) or even on a chair. If you are sitting on a chair, make sure you scoot forward and never, ever lean your back against the back of the chair. Support yourself for the whole session of meditation.



The back and shoulders should be very straight; this is essential for meditative practice. There must be some tension. We do not seek overwhelming pain, or pain of any kind, and should not completely upset the balance of the mind, but neither are we just lounging around. A straight back, neck and shoulders is a significant part of the awakening that separates meditation from lounging. There should be a need for focus on the posture. The posture should be conscious, not merely adopted and forgotten, but rather *held*. Hold your back, neck and shoulders straight. Tuck the chin in slightly and aim the part of your head that was open when you were a baby at the sky. Imagine that your bum is the peak of an immense, deep and rooted mountain—with kilometers of balance and strength beneath you. Imagine your head is connected to the Heavens by a tether that comes from that part of the skull that was open when you were born. Dangling taut from Heaven while founded deep in the Earth is a good place to start.

The mouth should be gently closed and the tongue gently on the roof of the mouth. This will create an energetic orbit that may become important to you as you progress in your practice. We recommend keeping the eyes open. Gaze downward at a point on the wall or floor and allow your eyesight to relax. Some meditation techniques recommend closing the eyes, but you cannot close the other senses, so why this one? Also, we find that when the eyes are closed, we get sleepy easily, and there is a sensation of being alone in a room with the mind, which then becomes more powerful and active as a result. Experiment with both and see if you stay more present and awake with your eyes open and if your meditation practice has more of an influence on your daily life and your tea practice when your eyes are open.

Place the right hand in the left palm with the thumbs gently together. This is called the “*dhyana mudra*.” It is a very helpful aspect of meditation practice. First and foremost it is like planting a flag—it is a nonverbal, non-conceptual statement made to the world that “this is reality.” We are saying to the world that “this is the moment of enlightenment.” Hold the world in you palms...

Try your best not to move for the whole meditation session. Remaining still as opposed to our usual state of physical agitation, to blindly reacting to our sensations, is a powerful revolution in our way of being. If you do need to move, then move as slowly and as little as you can—in slow increments. First breathe and stop before moving, so that the movement is conscious and not reactive. Then slowly move as little as possible. Do not quickly open your legs if they are asleep, for example. Instead, slowly lift them a bit and release some pressure. Again breathe and if the relief is not enough, then slowly lift more, etc. The same for returning to your posture—slow and intentional movements.

The Mind

Eventually, you can practice what is called “*shikantaza*,” which literally means “just sitting,” but in the beginning it is helpful to have a focus for the mind. There are two easy, natural and wonderful points of focus that are always with you. The first is your posture itself. This is the easiest and simplest focal point for the mind. As opposed to taking a posture and then forgetting about it, you can consciously, actively and intentionally *hold* your posture. Participate in your posture, in other words. *Be your body*—be embodied! *Hold* your back straight, your eyes open, your mouth closed with the tongue on the roof of the mouth. When you find that your mind has wandered, gently bring it back to the posture and make adjustments.

You can also focus on your breath along with the posture, feeling the touch of the incoming and outgoing breath as you breathe in naturally through the nose. Try to focus on not allowing a single breath to come in or go out without your awareness. Feel the touch of the air if possible, using the body as the instrument for knowing when the breath is coming in or going out, as opposed to the mind. Every time the mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath.

Never allow yourself to get frustrated. Frustration at the wandering mind only fuels it. This is like trying to make the ripples in water go away by smacking them—you only make

more ripples. We must be patient and kind to ourselves. Do not fret over the mind’s habits. Patiently and persistently return to the posture and/or breath. It doesn’t matter how many times your mind wanders away; it only matters how many times you bring it back!

Consistency

Practicing every day, morning and night is the key to a successful meditation practice. Make a strong vow that “come Hell or high water, I will sit every morning and evening, framing my day in peace. That way, I start each day peacefully and wash away all of its trials and tribulations in the evening before bed.” Remember, feeling that you have too much to do and too little time is literally the definition of stress.

Consistency is everything in meditation. As with exercise, it is amazing how quickly we can fall out of shape when we stop. Even after years of exercising, you can fall out of shape in just weeks when you stop actively exercising and eating right. The same is true for meditation. Daily practice, morning and evening, is therefore essential towards bringing this mind into your life. We would suggest a minimum of twenty minutes twice a day, slowly working up to one hour.

The “too much to do and too little time” mind is also very inefficient. Even though it repeats the story that there is way too much to get done for healthy activities like meditation, such a mind is very inefficient. Meditators produce more, are clearer and more efficient with their time, often achieving several times more with the same resources of time and space as others. You may find that over time your meditation practice increases the amount you get done in a week, as opposed to taking away from it, not to mention the wonderful effect it will have on your happiness and well-being.





Full Lotus



Half Lotus



Burmese



Cushion Seiza



Bench Seiza



Chair

坐
禪



2019 ZEN & TEA RETREAT

Our Annual Casa Cuadrau Refuge

Every year, we are blessed to host a spectacular Zen & Tea retreat at the amazing Casa Cuadrau in the Pyrenees. Nestled in the small village of Vio, Casa Cuadrau was built out of an old ruin in a majestic corner of the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park by Daniel Benito and Katya Ríos Chávez. Every autumn, a few dozen of us gather there from all over the world for a ten-day retreat in silence. And the silence inside of us echoes deep in the valleys and mountains all around. The Nature around Casa Cuadrau makes you feel small, and pulls time apart as well, leaving hours to feel like days, and days like weeks. We practice Zazen several hours a day, and also have tea ceremonies and tea classes. But many leave with more memories surrounding the magnificent hikes we take. Every day we walk in silence, feeling the ground, listening to Nature and being transformed by the glorious vistas all around. Then, on the middle day, we take one epic day-long hike to a remote location to have a silent tea session. Walking for hours in silence with so many Chajin is a lifelong memory. We hope you all get the chance to join us one year!

 **Antonio Moreno, Spain**

As the years pass, I find myself increasingly appreciating the cyclical nature of life in its myriad manifestations... the human body, the seasons, the moon, greater astrology, seasonal produce, personal rituals, etc. The more I pay attention, the more significance they accrue and hence, the more conscious I become of them, which, ironically, highlights this cyclical nature I'm talking about. Finally, everything is intertwined and follows some form of circle. Now I'm tempted to delve into the circle of fifths and speak in circles about the significance of circumference, wheeling and dealing, round and round until we get dizzy... then I'll know I've really driven the point home!

In a cyclical world, when does our year begin? Is it on January 1st, Chinese New Year, your birthday, the Winter Solstice, the day school starts perhaps? To a large degree the Annual Zen & Tea Retreat has come to mark the beginning of my calendar year. Once September comes along, I know the summer is coming to an end, and soon I will have to pick up the pace as fall and winter approach. Now, that might seem odd for a person striving

to live in harmony with the seasons as the colder weather is synonymous with hibernation, slower body rhythms and general lethargy, but that's now my case as a certain twist of fate has me at the helm of Caj Chai Teahouse where high season is November to March as that is when it's coldest and in a climate as warm as Spain, that becomes doubly significant.

This means that come the end of the summer, I have a feeling that soon I must gather strength to get through the winter cycle; the Zen & Tea Retreat serves as a portal for that and much more. For ten days, I turn off my cell phone, have no access to my email and relish the luxury of being in silence with nothing to do but meditate, drink and serve tea, walk in the beautiful Pyrenees and eat delicious vegetarian food made with love.

A cyclical world must not be confused with repetition. Each new cycle seems to spin on a different axis that revolves around the particular themes and issues that have sprung from what I've been working on or dealing with. Thus, each retreat is very different for both intrinsic reasons as well as my personal perspective. But what never

changes is my sense that the retreat date has arrived at the perfect time, just when I needed it—not only because I must gather strength and a sense of purpose and commitment to carry me through, but because there's something about that transitioning time between summer and fall that moves things, switches gears and gives a little break that helps me find perspective.

Each retreat is different, but at the same time, I know what to expect—the general arc, the ups and downs, the pains and bliss. When I pull into Casa Cuadrau, I have a strong feeling of returning home and rejoice in the new beginning. And just as a church or mosque has a certain aura of peace due to the years of prayer, quiet and stillness that one can tap into irrespective of religious preference just by entering and sitting for a little while, when I walk into Casa Cuadrau and go up to my chambers and the adjoining meditation hall, I am recharged with the lessons of past years. When I sit down on the cushion to meditate, I have the power of my previous meditation sessions and retreats behind me, serving as motivation and strength. It is all cumulative, or seems so.

In my daily life, I don't maintain a rigorous sitting meditation schedule; in fact, I rarely sit and meditate more than twenty minutes while the tea is boiling. While I am sure I'd benefit from a more disciplined daily meditation ritual, the deep, immersive dive we take in a ten-day retreat deepens my practice very powerfully. After all, it's not about how long you sit every day, but with what mind you approach every minute of your day. I think the retreat works as an intensive training, sharpening the mind like a tool that must be polished and taken care of, an acknowledgment of our weaknesses and strengths, a time for cultivating awareness and presence, a time of rest and renewal.

I then find that as the busy season in my life approaches, I am calmer and more focused, more patient and compassionate towards myself and others, and more likely to remember the relative importance of a given situation, concern or demand rather than be overwhelmed by what can easily be misinterpreted as the burdens of responsibility.

This capacity for clarity of focus and concentration is invaluable to me as it spills into every area of my life. It's not just a matter of my one-pointed mind while addressing the tasks at hand, but how I can now, very deliberately, decide to stop whatever I am doing to fully address whatever obstacle comes up to interrupt me, rather than multi-tasking in a half-hearted and haphazard manner. Ultimately, this is cultivation of presence, and that's the most I can ask for... to be more present onto this precious life I live.

That's the challenge, to be onto each moment, to remember to remember, to try to bring your beginner's mind attitude to life and not take things for granted. The lessons of each retreat deepen over time, and they become intuitive knowledge through repetition—just as in the Global Tea Hut magazine we are constantly reminded to reread “basic” information that gets repeated from issue to issue as our understanding deepens each time. At each retreat, there are certain fundamental themes that get addressed in the discourses, and each year they penetrate further. And I know this because throughout the year, I find myself remembering wisdom shared

by Wu with increasing frequency, and reminding myself of things like, “As it is, not as you'd like it to be,” or “No negative limiting storylines,” just to give a couple of examples.

I encourage all of you reading this to make some time and space in your lives to come on the retreat next October and experience it for yourselves. Hopefully you can come a few days early or stay on for a few days extra as we usually host some tea events with Wu De in Barcelona as well! Stay tuned!







Standing and gazing around an undulating and alive Northern Spain landscape, “*This might be the most beautiful place I will ever drink tea...*” are the first words I said to my fellow Chajin as I stepped out of the shared taxi and stood on the ground outside Casa Cuadrau. I think I will always remember that moment in time, as if there was something deep inside me waking up and whispering, “Listen, this is a magical moment... remember.” I believe it is in these magical moments that beauty arises. And when beauty arises, magic happens...

The Greek root for the word “beauty” is related to the word for “calling,” to “*kalon*” and “*kalein*.” From the first time I read about this retreat in the Global Tea Hut magazine in 2018, I knew I had to go. It “called” me, in a sense.

I wish I could literally draw my experience for you, as these words I feel don’t do my experience justice. Have you ever been to a beautiful place and tried to capture the moment with your camera? But then later, often split seconds later, look at the image and realize that the photo was completely different than what your eyes saw, and what your body viscerally felt. I often find now during these times that trying to capture these magical moments would actually take away from the magnitude of the experience itself. One cannot participate and observe at the same time. By trying to capture the magic, I lost the magic, and by allowing the magic to just be, I was the magic...

In my attempt to draw on the many countless “wordless sparklings,” as Wu De calls such moments, of this amazing journey, I turn to the late Irish poet and philosopher, John O’Donohue, on the idea of Beauty, as for me, Tea and Zen are one Flavor of Beauty...

Beauty isn’t all about just nice loveliness. Beauty is about more rounded, substantial becoming. So, I think beauty, in that sense, is about an emerging fullness, a greater sense of grace and elegance, a deeper sense of depth, and also a kind of homecoming for the enriched memory of your unfolding life.

This retreat was beautiful all around. It was easy to turn inside and reflect in my own beauty by being surrounded by a breathtaking beautiful environment—people, place, and purpose (there is something beautiful and special about two dozen people from all around the world coming to sit down and share in a bowl of Tea together...). The space and structure of the retreat schedule also added to the “homecoming.”

Among several experiences of retreats, this one felt uniquely different. It had “presence.” A different felt presence I have never felt before, a presence amplified by the beauty around it. This was observed in one way by *all* the retreatants who were there for the entire ten days attended *all* the meditation offerings inside and outside Casa Cuadrau, from the Zazen sits to the nature hikes, *all* the retreatants showed up, sat, and walked with me. This was the first time I experienced this level of presence in a retreat which gave me a greater appreciation of *sangha*, or community, and a deep gratitude for the space and structure to practice in those ten days.

“*Sit down and have some tea.*” There is a lot to unpack and experience with this tea saying. If I learned one specific tea lesson, and tea lessons are of course life lessons, it would simply be: “Sit down and have some tea.” In my experience, this tea lesson can take many forms—from simply creating space in life, to celebrating the ordinary and the extraordinary, from reclaiming the sacred, to focused participation in purposeful work, from “stay[ing] with the tea” in all the processes—to “Draw the water, lay the coals, boil the water and steep the tea”—all is a masterful, graceful, and worthwhile endeavor as I just “sit down and have some tea.” There is a powerful rhythm that emerges with this that reconnects me to the reality of my unfolding life experience, a receiving and returning rhythm that reconnects to the natural rhythm where neither time nor space nor created thing can touch.

Practically, this retreat has strengthened my tea practice in two ways: by returning back to the basics of bowl tea, and learning how to be a guest in a

tea ceremony. By returning back to the basics, this allowed for greater refinement of this type of brewing method and a cultivation of non-judgmental appreciation and acceptance as a guest in a tea ceremony, respectively.

Lastly, like many things, an experience isn’t complete, or at least not adventurous or humorous, unless there is at least one challenge or obstacle in the journey. The challenge for me was doubt. Although powerfully unsettling at times, I believe doubt can be powerfully settling *into* “the way it is,” a sharpening tool into clinical reasoning, and an avenue into curiosity, wonder, and awe. I’ll leave you with a Zen teacher’s reflection on doubt that aided me along my journey: “There are two things I know for certain: I am here and I love you.” This I know... I love you and I am here with you in Tea. To all who read this: May your bowls run deep and spirits rise high, and may you come “Home” with each and every bowl your way...



*Autumn is the Air...
Autumn Bridge is a Delight...
As it is, it’s Home...*

🌿🍵: Aude Barras, Switzerland

This Fall during the Zen and Tea Retreat at Casa Cuadrau, I touched my own heart by intentionally, willfully surrendering the impulse to do. Gently melting into myself, I softened and fell in love with nature while tea became my mistress.

Writing this, I just received this month's issue of the Global Tea Hut, and I am delighting in a bowl of Four Seasons Red. Witnessing the swirls of steam dance in front of my eyes, I introduce myself to The Empress. Receptive, I take in my first sip, and inviting Her warmth, I return home to my body and allow Her medicine to unravel in the depth of silence as I reflect on the time of our first encounters.

I remember Wu De speaking in one of the first evening talks about the retreat being an "*Osoji*," or big cleaning

for the mind, and indeed this is what the ten days at Casa Cuadrau did for me. I literally emptied my bowl and created space to receive and reconnect with the depth of my heart. As the softening began, the projections started to fall away and space opened through which direct contact with all of life could be experienced—true intimacy of my being in Love.

Sitting in silence in my home, I rest filled with wonder and gratitude at my time in Casa Cuadrau. I can hear at a distance the lullaby of the fairy chime conducting our day. I can taste the feeling tone of *wu wei* allowing the life energy to flow continuously, harmonizing us with the All. I can feel the breath of tea, the comings and goings of the bowls, echoing the ebb and flow of life, our individuality and togeth-

erness. I can smell the crisp morning air as the sun rises over the mountains, I can see the beauty of all my fellow companions entering in communion with tea, themselves and the silent web that holds each one of us—open, raw and radiant. Curious, my meeting with Tea was a return to innocence.

Resting in the Mystery, I bow with reverence to the spirit of tea and all those that have developed the humility to become Her emissary. Plunging into the wonder, I am reminded that the moment that you are present and receptive, everything becomes a ceremony, every action a prayer, an occasion to soften and enter into intimacy with all of life.



05.10.2019

Vio, Pyrenees, Spain

A Conversation with Tea

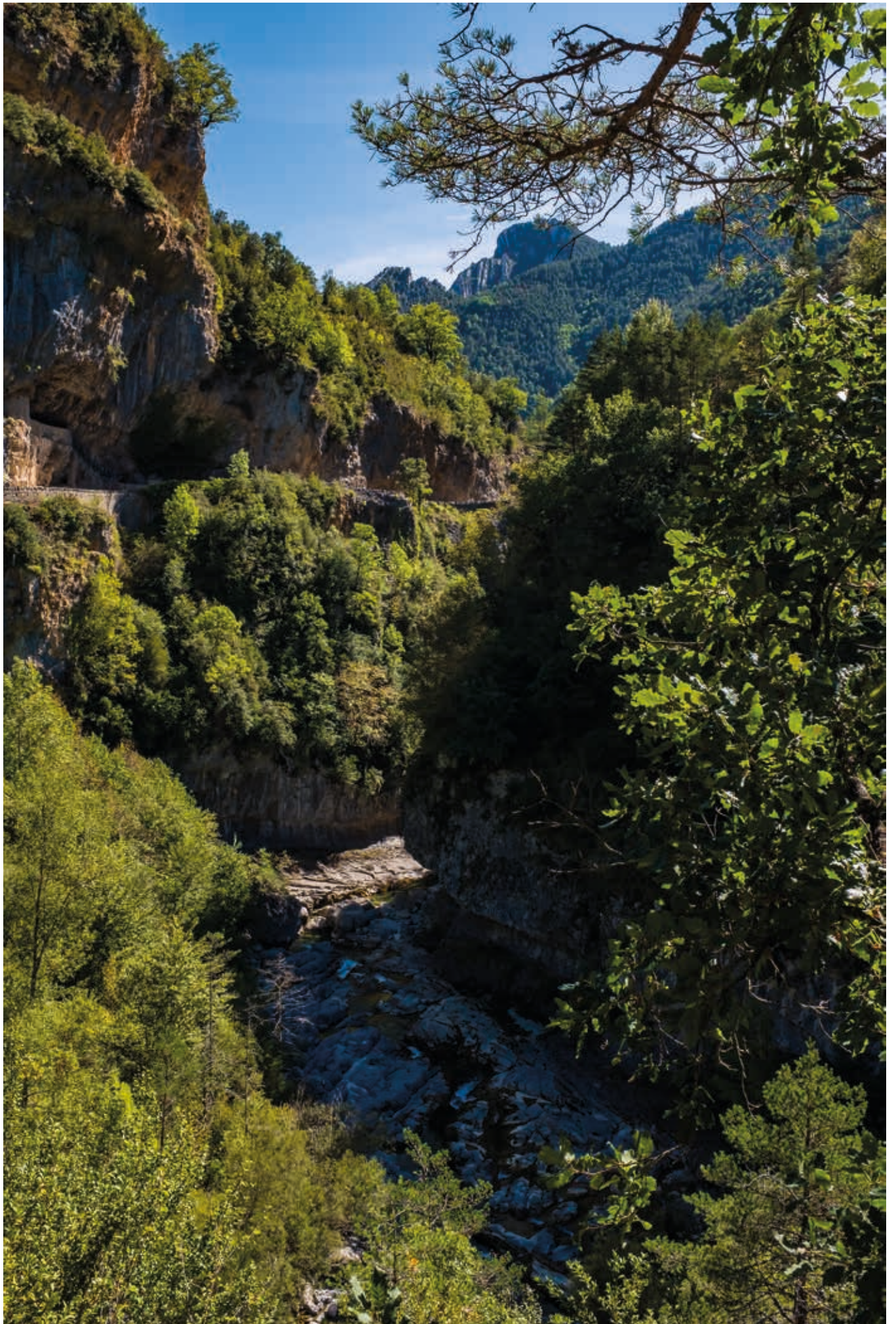
“Good morning beautiful
I am so pleased we meet again
I am open to receive you
Play with me ...
Dance in my being...
I am here...
Total...
Listening ...”

In the sweetness of silence she gently begins to reveal herself

“Soften even more my dear
Open more deeply
I am you
Allow me to show you the warmth of your heart
I know the suffering is real
You forgot for so long
You thought I was to be found somewhere else
In distant lands ...

Away from the center of your being!
It's all right sweetheart...
Soften...
Forgive yourself...
You are finding your way back home
Back to me ... Back to you ...”

In the profundity of intimacy all that was separating us, shatters softly, sweetly
In this spaciousness the nectar of Being seeps in with every sip
Drunk I am on the liquor of Life
On the ambrosia of the Love that I AM



Good for Nothing Zen

坐禪無益

茶人: Shen Su (聖素), Taiwan/Canada

I have a terrible habit of doing. Simply doing anything. It's an unconscious impulse to do, to get things done at all times of the day, organized or not. When there's nothing to do, I'll find something to do out of a deep, conditioned discomfort to do nothing. And once I finish one task, I tend to leap to the next one, without a break, forgetting that how I finished the last task determines how I start the next one; forgetting that a well-organized schedule with rest periods will actually facilitate getting more done in less time with higher quality; forgetting that no matter how much I get done in a day there will always be endless work to do; forgetting where my priorities lie; forgetting to frame my day with periods of presence; and ultimately forgetting who I am, completely identified with doing this and doing that until sleep slaps me in the face, or at least something strong enough to overcome the unconscious force that controls me throughout the day.

The purpose of "*sesshin*" is to create a disciplined schedule to facilitate a power greater than the unconscious force that controls you which will soften you and open you in order to touch your heart. Finding that force is *exactly* what this "*sesshin*" at Casa Cuadrau was about for me: finding a force strong enough within myself to wake me up from my daze of doing. Not just finding it, actually, but participating in the disciplined schedule in order to nurture that force within myself and call on it when needed. What that force

was, I didn't know at the time, but I deeply wanted to know, and I knew it paradoxically existed in the practice of *zazen*, just sitting and doing nothing. This "good for nothing Zen" as I'd heard it called was just that, an antidote to incessant doing, literally good for doing nothing, which is just what I needed. Humorously enough, I knew that what I needed wasn't going to be fun or peaceful, even if it meant doing nothing, in fact, quite the opposite. Medicine is bitter after all. We need to face the things that make us most uncomfortable so that we can accept them, work with them and ultimately overcome them or utilize them to our advantage. That's one of the main reasons for a retreat: the teacher, students and schedule create an environment that supports us to do the things which facilitate our own growth, the things that therefore challenge us, the things we wouldn't *normally* do by ourselves until we have enough self-discipline.

But it's too easy to resonate with teachings. It's too easy to hear or read something and understand it at the intellectual level. However, wisdom must be experiential in order for these teachings to become a part of who we are. We must live our Zen, in other words. Even these very sentences are frustrating and humorous because it's one thing to write them down and a completely different thing to put them into practice. Good thing there's "good for nothing Zen" to help us do just that. And the place where we "do nothing" is paramount.

Casa Cuadrau: A Place for Practice

I have great respect for the retreat environment at Casa Cuadrau. It's a beautiful and well-designed center that facilitates self-cultivation, self-awareness and connection to our natural environment. It holds the capacity to become a place of authentic practice. Of course, any place has such a capacity to facilitate spiritual training. It's really what we bring to it as a community of practitioners that creates the schedule and authenticity of practice. But like an office that has the potential to be organized, they're not always so, and are often quite the opposite. And yet, there are inherent qualities that make some locations more suitable to certain functions. The beauty, grandiosity and depth of silence at Casa Cuadrau, for example, have made this place particularly suited to self-cultivation. That, and the brilliant design of the facility all go towards making this retreat center very powerful, perhaps powerful enough to facilitate something greater than the unconscious forces that control us. But what else makes a place of authentic practice?

An authentic place of practice is *not* solely a place of peace and calm. It's not a vacation or a temporary escape from our problems. In fact, it is a schedule, a community, and a discipline that creates time and space to directly face our challenges. These are truly the backbone of strong practice.






It will actually facilitate awareness of the things we constantly repress and try to escape from. So quite the opposite to what many expect, when you enter a place of authentic practice and practice authentically, you will likely experience some combination of fear, pain, anxiety, confusion and any mixture of emotions that we haphazardly push just beneath the thin veil that shrouds our day-to-day perception of reality. A place of authentic practice will pressure your issues to the surface and force you to look at them and consider how to work with them. This can often be quite unpleasant at times and even shocking. But again, these are signs of progress and growth, not to be mistaken as regression. We are simply highlighting the areas where we need the most work, the areas we don't normally look at and even ignore. Of

course, that won't be comfortable, but it is necessary for self-cultivation. If a meditation retreat is full of comfort and bliss, joy and ease, I might take a closer look at what's going on behind the scenes because something probably is not right. That sounds more like a facade or perhaps a vacation instead of a retreat, which remember, is a step backwards and takes a look inwards to see who we really are. Not to say we shouldn't enjoy vacations, but also not to confuse them with retreat environments. The relaxation from a vacation will be short lived, whereas the discipline from a retreat will last a lifetime!

Naturally, to find out who we really are requires us to look into the places we don't normally look. Everyone knows their strong points, but it's a strong point to know your faults, one we too often overlook, lest those faults

mar the superficial image we want to create in the minds of others. We do this unconsciously because we don't really know ourselves and so we're afraid of those hidden aspects of ourselves. The one who is comfortable with their complete self isn't afraid of their character defects and therefore doesn't care if others are also aware of them. Not in an adolescent, immature way of not caring, but in a mature, responsible way that has stemmed from deep introspection into who they are and what that means. Places of authentic practice stimulate this kind of experience, this kind of understanding, and it's not always fun, but it's the most worthwhile kind of experience we can explore for the sake of ourselves, others, and the environment. In my experience, there is nothing better than clarity of mind and wisdom.



坐禪道

覺醒的佛

But self-cultivation doesn't have to be about darkness, shadow, repression and pain all the time. There are periods of bliss, awakening, joy and jubilation! They ebb and flow and woof and warp. Not attaching to either experience but rather observing them objectively, understanding their impermanent nature, is the middle way. The so-called good and bad come and go, just as with all natural phenomena. This is where Casa Cuadrau offers amazing balance, because in the midst of challenging self-cultivation lies some of the greatest natural beauty on earth! The raw surroundings of the Spanish Pyrenees are skillfully woven into the retreat schedule through daily, silent hikes that loosen the body, inspire the spirit, and remind us of our deep connection to Nature. These hikes offer a kind of meditation you won't expe-

rience anywhere else. I realized why walking meditation has been central to Zen practice for so many centuries.

The Senses

We are not meant to grope around with the six senses looking for "it" but to find it within ourselves and celebrate it through the six senses.

— Wu De from the 2019 Casa Cuadrau Retreat

Because the retreat is done in silence without access to any tech, you find yourself going through a kind of sensory deprivation. Going a single day without talking or using any tech can be a shocking experience for some, but ten days will completely change your relationship to your senses, in the best of ways. Fasting isn't just lim-

ited to our diets; tech fasts and noble silence (silence of body, speech, and mind) are also especially healthy in cycles throughout the year. What I often notice in any retreat is a heightened sense of awareness and general increase in sensitivity. The gross sensations subside while the subtle inner sensations expand. You might feel as though your entire body is breathing, eating, listening, touching or smelling. As your thoughts are observed with more focus and you react to them less, sights become sharper, sounds clearer, aromas stronger, touches more delicate and tastes more complex. What's particularly noticeable at Casa Cuadrau is the silence; there is a depth to it as deep as the glacier-carved valleys of the Pyrenees. It's one of the first things I noticed even before the retreat began, and it change my life in a powerful way.

During the retreat, this crystal-clear silence became like a breath of fresh mountain air, especially coming from the city where sounds thick as black smoke fill our senses at all times of the day.

What a difference it was, and what Wu De was pointing towards during this retreat, was to find that silence within ourselves, mirroring the natural environment, there at all times if we only but stop to take a look or listen. The environment there is so strong in such subtle ways, highlighted by a disciplined practice, that I can still close my eyes now, months later, and in one breath feel right at the heart of those mountain ranges, completely at peace.

Pain & Great Determination

After all the Zen talks and meditation walks, that inner force greater than my unconsciousness still eluded me. I recognized that a sign of this unconscious activity was an incessant, internal dialogue that perfectly reflected my incessant, external desire to do. I knew that when I was consumed by my own internal dialogue, the unconscious force was at play! One of the first things we notice in meditation is that as simple as the meditation method is, our minds are so out of control that we can't seem to focus on it for more than a few seconds, let alone minutes or hours. I knew that if a force existed that was strong enough to overcome that unconscious spell, that it would result in less internal dialogue. The scenery at Casa Cuadrau certainly helped to still my mind, but that came from a reliance on external circumstances which I knew wasn't the ultimate answer. So what was it?

Retreats are certainly experienced differently by each individual. I faced a lot of physical pain during this particular retreat, often struggling to just be with it and reacting to it by moving to temporarily ease the pressure in my limbs, uncomfortable with the way things were and trying to escape, if only for a brief moment. It's amazing that we typically do this all day. Interestingly, I realized from my own experience that physical pain grew to the point of ceasing my mental ac-

tivity because the only thing I could focus on in those moments of seated meditation was the sheer pain. I even tried to indulge in my own mental activity at times to escape the pain, but it outgrew my efforts to distract myself, forcing me to move. I knew that wasn't a skillful use of my meditation either! Trying to substitute one discomfort for another isn't the way. It's like trying to quit drinking by smoking or vice versa. Another available option, however, was to refine my meditation practice to concentrate on my experience in as objective a way as possible. The pain seriously forced me to concentrate if I was going to sit with it for any amount of time. With enough determination, it was actually possible to sit with the pain and experience it in a very different way. The determination turned suffering into medicine. In that moment, my view towards physical pain changed out of an actual experience on the cushion (as opposed to an intellectual understanding).

At first, I thought physical pain was the force stronger than my unconscious habits. My incessant thinking was stopped dead in its tracks by that pain. But what the teacher helped me to understand was that it was actually the internal determination to work with the pain (or any challenge) that is stronger than the unconscious forces that control us. Pain was just the catalyst. It was the rough surface upon which to refine my practice, but the decision to create that friction in an authentic way is where determination and grit come into play. And that's all we can ever rely upon because when the Pyrenees mountains aren't right outside my bedroom window, my determination goes with me wherever I am. *That's* the internal force I had to experience within by essentially sitting down and doing without. That's what good-for-nothing-Zen was pointing towards and what the mountains were silently reflecting. Easier said than done. As the Chinese saying goes, "The Heavenly Way Rewards the Diligent (天道酬勤)."







Voices from the Hut

In the past, we have opened up to the community a section of the magazine, “Voices from the Hut,” allowing all of you some pages to write about your experiences in Tea. Over the years, we have found that these are some of the best and most interesting articles we have ever published. Therefore, we have decided to include a “Voices from the Hut” section in every issue from now on! Our dear tea brother, Matthew Grohne, has volunteered to edit this section of the magazine. He has a lot of great topics, themes and ideas for future issues, and is in need of contributions from the community. (He may have already contacted you about contributing!) So, if you would like to contribute some writing to Global Tea Hut magazine or have an idea for an interesting topic, you can reach Matthew on the Global Tea Hut app (in the “Voices from the Hut” section), on Instagram (IG: foldedleaves), or at the email: voicesfromthehut@gmail.com We cannot wait to read all the exciting articles to come!

YELLOW MOUNTAIN BIRD SONG

茶人: Antonio Moreno

On October 11th I released the Tea album “Yellow Mountain Bird Song” and was blessed to have Wu De lead a Tea Ceremony while we were performing spontaneous renditions of some of the improvisations that make up the album. Wu asked that I share something about the process behind this tea and music project.

It all started on Thursday, April 20, 2017, during the Global Tea Hut Annual Trip. My first morning in Huangshan (Yellow Mountain, 黄山), China, a small group of Global Tea Hut members woke up extra early with the intention of catching “Foguang (佛光)” or “Buddha’s Light,” the rare and beautiful phenomenon of sacred landscape and light whereby the sun rises amidst a sea of clouds as a symbol of good fortune. I used to think I had none...

As I climbed the steps along the fog-enshrouded path, I became enchanted by songbirds—a chorus of hundreds repeating the same hypnotic melody, over and over again. Enraptured, I breathed it in for a long while. Fortunately, it occurred to me to record it on my phone for posterity.

Now, almost three years later, I still haven’t seen Buddha’s Light, but I am ready to share the alchemy of personal transformation and healing that those birds inspired in me.

See... I never ventured off that morning in pursuit of good fortune via Buddha’s Light (and yet I found it anyway, even without catching *Foguang* on a foggy morning). In fact, in serendipitous fashion, I only learned about this positive omen recently when I looked up translating the Chinese term for the album’s liner notes.

There are many lessons in play here that relate to what I’d like to express about this tea, music and Zen. For starters, plans are great in the sense they serve as declarations of thoughtful intention in projecting or invoking what we’d like to nurture or experience. Yes, plans are nice as a template or framework, but these plans will always have to be approved by a greater plan that maybe, just maybe, at the very most we can sometimes intuit a little bit.

As I was silently walking those steps in Huangshan, my heart steeped in gratitude for the opportunity to even be on that trip, in awe and wonder, the

rapturous bird song melody repeating itself ceaselessly until it occurred to me that I wanted to remember that moment and thus captured it on my phone.

I didn’t know what the field recording would sound like and I didn’t care. I didn’t know I would soon be inspired to record a song based on that bird-song melody “Misty Morning Muse.” There was never a plan to make a tea music album. It evolved as a natural sequence, one step at a time, like the foggy steps in Huangshan where it all started. It’s as if that birdsong were a spell and its magic occurred in the unconscious, healing me deeply with a medicine that was administered in increasing dosages as my body was ready for it.

The fact is initially I *just* wanted to record a single song using that melody as a starting point, and months later I went into the studio and recorded enough material for several records. I now look back with deep gratitude and appreciation for this slow, deep, layered integration and its relatively aimless process. I now understand that it resulted in something extraordinary.





茶 *All of the photographs in this article were taken by Antonio himself on the morning of the walk he recorded, which became the inspiration for his beautiful tea album.*

The album is greater than I ever could have wished for, and it happened without me seeking or projecting anything grand.

I will skip over the precise details and sequence of epiphanies that guided me through this creative process and, just like the new morning those birds were heralding, resulted in personal growth and renewal. But I'd like to share some of the reflections and revelations that come to mind.

See... recording the material was the next step, but a giant leap was still waiting patiently ahead... Over the years my relationship with music has increasingly been one of improvisation. Rarely a day goes by that I don't pick up an instrument for at least a few short minutes just to play it aimlessly. My relationship with playing music became a personal thing where I had long stopped performing in public as I had stopped writing "songs" and was perfectly content just playing for the

sake of playing. This is as true for tea as well, which should ever and always be brewed for its own sake.

These birds that inspired me were not singing alone, and they were not singing in unison—they sung together, each to its own beat, simultaneously. They all took part, held nothing back, joining the flow they joined the stream of melody, the stream of consciousness.

As a Chajin, serving tea taught me to really open my heart amongst others, to rest in my true self while serving others. I now realize that the bird song taught me I must also do so through music—and this is my spiritual progression and opportunity for self-realization as it combines my two life passions, tea and music. And while it's easy to laugh imagining a single bird hesitating in joining their chorus of interwoven sameness of melody, I realized that I had become insecure and afraid of performing, much less improvising in public.

I never imagined that one day I'd be improvising on piano before an audience with Wu De serving tea (and Petr Novak and Raneta Coolakova serving the ceremony). And yet, thanks to a perfectly aligned set of circumstances, through tea I was about to merge my inner and outer selves through silence and music and share a re-interpretation of "Yellow Mountain Bird Song" live in the stream-of-consciousness musical expression I always kept private. It is this stream of consciousness that I invoke when sitting down to share something about my personal tea and music process. This is the place of stillness I invoke when I brew tea or host a tea ceremony. It is there in stillness of silence where I go down into the visceral depths of my soul and tap into that primordial vibration where we find inspiration and may ultimately inspire others... the place where I rest in the essence of my being and patiently await what I yet not know needs to



be expressed. Creation is renovation! In this virgin soil the seeds of creation will sprout with authenticity. For in the stillness of silence blooms a fresh creative spark that does not mimic or repeat any formulas or tricks which have proven successful in the past. This space is all about the present.

Wu Wei (無為) is a Chinese Daoist and Zen term that can be translated as “aimless aim” or “wayless Way.” It describes the action of “non-action,” that place of “effortless effort” where you are present onto the moment, guided by it, led where it takes you. *Wu Wei* is that place of stillness at the heart of improvisation, meditation and tea ceremony.

Over the years through tea, I cultivated sharing this presence, this silence... the meditative mind. I train myself to still myself, quiet my mind and serve others. The essence of that which I do from this space is always authentic and on point. It is only now

that I want to think about the process and put words to it that I can hope to convey what goes on... but in practice I hope to embody the omniscient listener through silence, and shun the currents that may want to lead me to analyzing anything specific. For at that moment, I will stop being in the stream of consciousness.

As Chajin we know we must always be well-prepared to serve our guests and have the resources to adapt to any situation. A tea ceremony flows freely and naturally because of the practice, love and dedication that led up to the ceremony. A tea ceremony is improvised in the sense that it evolves naturally and is open and accommodating to unpredictable factors.

In the same way, “Yellow Mountain Bird Song” is not a collection of random improvisations. Just as you should never brew a tea in ceremony that you yourself are not familiar with. Each song began as a title, an image

of a landscape or a fellow tea wayfarer, an emotion, some kind of inspiring starting point from which we could take off. Eventually I would connect a musical expression to that starting point. I’d establish a musical beginning in harmony with that place I wanted to return to and then follow its course. Each improvisation of the same motif was always different, but some characteristics would reappear. I would jot these down to serve as reminders of directions I could potentially explore.

My dear friend, amazing musician and accomplished producer, Juan Rodríguez Berbín, had only heard mere glimpses of a few of the directions these inspirations were taking me just two days prior to our recording session. So when we recorded at the studio, he too was fresh and improvisational, taking my cues, describing the place I wanted to evoke and accompanying me with open ears and an open heart. This flow was as natural and graceful as Tea.

So... you can say this is practiced improvisation taken all the way to the recording studio and onwards... all the way to the music ceremony.

Even while recording at the studio, tea played an integral role as throughout our sessions we stopped frequently to share some silence and brew specially selected powerful teas (like Shaman's Drum) to calm our minds, loosen our bodies, set the tone and ease our way into the empty heart-space where creation comes from and the songs come out and play themselves in the same no-mind mindset where only the teapot is brewing the tea. Art happens naturally when we are just the vessel!

In Cha Dao, we practice tea ceremony as a way of self-cultivation, striving to live every moment of our day with the awareness and presence we cultivate in meditation and tea ceremony. When serving tea, we are removing the self, getting out of the way as much as possible, and making space for what is authentic to emerge and be shared.

In improvised music, we are also challenged with getting out of the way. You want the music to flow freely, spontaneously and authentically so that it transmits something pure which doesn't come from the intellect. This is very much akin to the way that we prepare tea as well.

In the same manner, once we had selected and mixed the tracks, I then set out to quiet my mind and ordered the songs so together they flowed harmoniously while accompanying a tea ceremony. And finally, since nowadays most people don't buy CDs anymore, I decided to curate a very special Tea and Music Experience and create a unique tea blend and release the record as a bag of this "Yellow Mountain Bird Song" tea which contains the download code and a booklet with photos from the trip. I hope you enjoy the record with your favorite teas, and it accompanies many an inspiring tea session!



As a special offer to Global Tea Hut members, Antonio has graciously offered you all a discount code for 50% off this beautiful tea album (valid until April, 2020).

Head over to:

www.cajchai.com

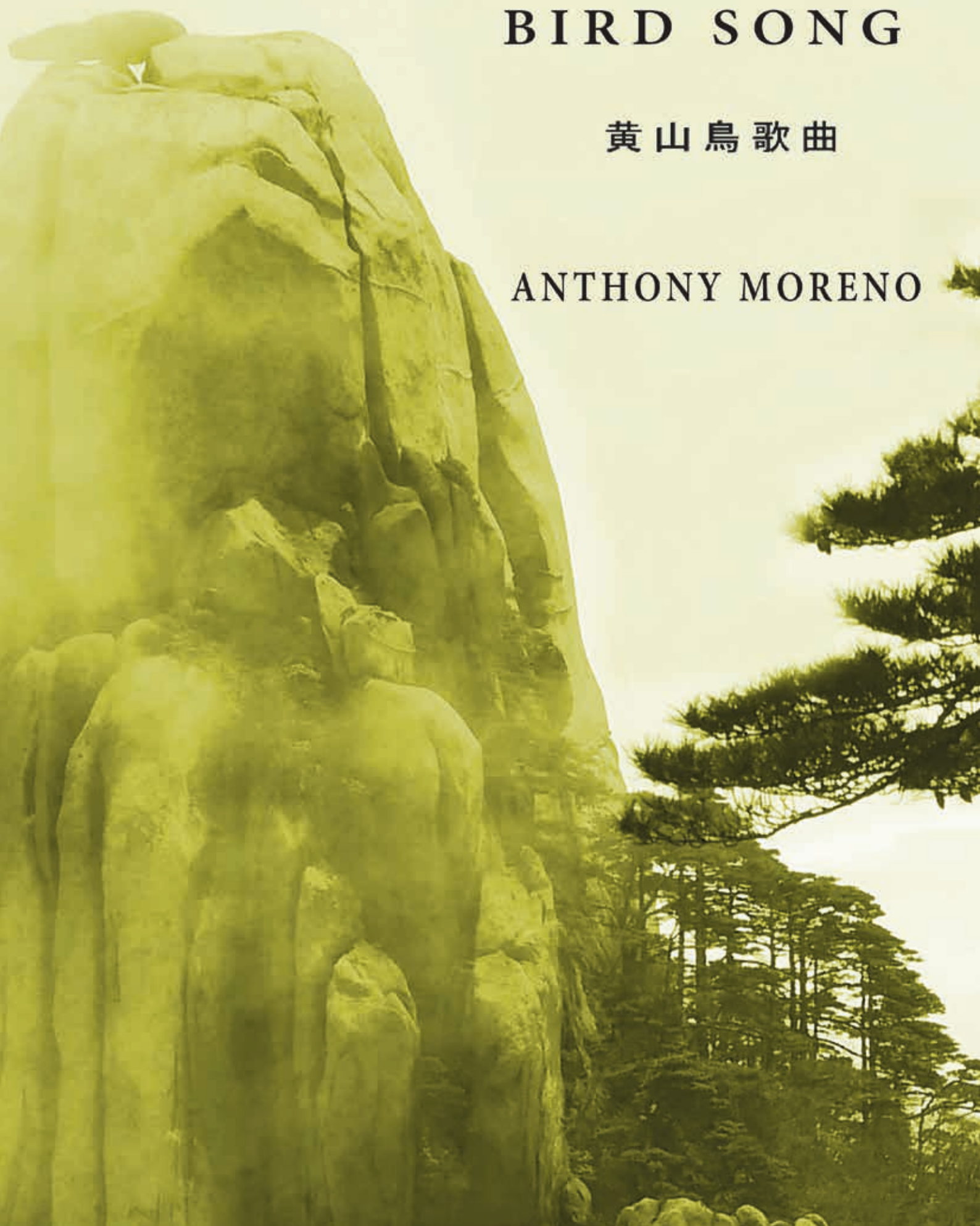
And enter this code at checkout:

Global Tea & Music Lovers

YELLOW MOUNTAIN BIRD SONG

黄山鳥歌曲

ANTHONY MORENO



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 John Johnson.

I am honored to be one of Global Tea Hut's monthly TeaWayfarers. Since November of 2015, I've closely read every page of this, the world's best tea magazine, and each month's final feature, TeaWayfarer, brings friendly closure. Being included really feels special, and I'm grateful to be sharing this space with you now.

To share with you my roots and journey through the tea forest requires me to discover them for myself. Living day to day, it's easy to dismiss both how I've gotten to where I am and where I am going. But since we're all reading this together it means our different paths have crossed here in the Global Tea Hut universe. What a great place to meet!

As a small child in the U.S. state of Indiana I remember tea (tea bag style) being a common beverage both at home with my mother and at my grandparent's house. Even though it was over forty years ago, I do remember feeling good about being old enough to drink tea like everyone else. I guess that was a milestone for me as a kid. It wouldn't be until 1994, when I was 21 years old, that tea would become a formal experience. Living in Southern California at this time, I started my first studies of Chinese martial arts. Sitting for tea with our teacher before or after lessons was common. At the time I didn't understand the connection between Zen and Tea, but it should have been obvious.

Over the next many years I would treat tea like a delicacy. I bought tea pots that looked nice and sometimes received them as gifts. I bought the teas with fancy packaging from the health food store and exotic sounding teas from shops in Chinatown. All my friends knew that coming to visit me meant the chance to try some new tea.

This is why, in 2015, a friend knew I was the right person to invite to a tea service at her work. Each month the staff were invited by the owners to a group meditation event, and this particular event was tea. The man serving tea that morning, Simon, served leaves in a bowl. This was something I had never experienced before, but found fascinating. The tea was great. But just as powerful were the excerpts he shared from a book that changed many of us here: *The Way of Tea*. I remember it like it was yesterday. The spirit of this book resonated with me so deeply that I went straight from the tea session to the bookstore. I ordered *The Way of Tea*, and within only a few days, it was in my hands and I had read it all.

This was one of the most profound and life-changing experiences I've ever had. Beyond the message of how Tea can be the focus of a mindful life, it referenced a Zen and Tea Center in Taiwan, and even said I could visit! Too good to be true, right? I was on a plane six weeks later to find out. For anyone who never had the opportunity to visit the Tea



茶人: John Johnson, USA

Sage Hut, it was very real, and more amazing than you could imagine. I've been a true believer in the Global Tea Hut mission ever since.

I suspect most of us here have hectic and complicated lives. I know I do. Owning a business and trying to manage a personal life sometimes requires extra effort to find the time and space for tea. The arrival of Global Tea Hut each month is my reminder to keep up the momentum. No matter how long my to-do list is, or how many deadlines I have to meet, I've never once regretted a single minute I've sat with tea.

The influence of this path of tea and our community has radically improved the way I see and interact with the world. The effects of drinking and serving tea the way we learn here continue into my personal and professional life as if tea herself is always in my body. When tea is part of your day, every day, it's always in the background, like a tour guide pointing out the valuable but subtle features you might miss without a guide. The podcasts, Youtube videos, phone app, and live Instagram presentations are the perfect compliments to this monthly magazine. With so much information spread across so many platforms, it's like we're all students in Global Tea Hut University. What a wonderful place to be studying with all of you!

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Yixing Teapots

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Tea Utensils

茶主题: Ginbin



We need your help to get to a place where we can build your permanent Center, Light Meets Life. (And we do hope that you feel that our Center is yours, not ours.) On March 1st, we will together be hosting fundraisers around the world. Gather your communities and host a tea ceremony, a raffle or any other idea you have to help us take a step towards our new Center. If you want, you can just gather, drink some tea and send us your love and good wishes. Don't underestimate such positivity!



Let us know if you have any advice for the changes coming this next year. It really means more than ever that you continue to help and support us through these big changes.



We have some of the best teas we have ever had for a Light Meets Life fundraiser this year. We figured we had to get some excellent teas, since this year we are trying to build a new Center. Don't miss out!



We are thinking of creating an online Cha Dao course in the form of videos that could be downloaded or purchased with included tea and teaware. This would start for beginners, but we could do levels. Let us know if you have any ideas.



With the closing of our Center Tea Sage Hut, we would like to encourage you to solidify your local tea communities with more activities like tea ceremonies and even weekend retreats. Check out the past issues on Tea & Zen, which are published every February and have been for the last four years. In those issues, there are accounts and the advice of communities in Holland and Estonia, for example, in their efforts to host tea retreats together, learning, sharing and growing in Cha Dao. We are the Center!

Center News



It is Light Meets Life time!!! We have launched a giant, worldwide fundraiser to make the move this very year. This will be our permanent Center, offering tea courses for the rest of our lives and beyond, serving future generations of tea lovers. Visit www.lightmeetslife.org now!



We want to thank everyone in the community for the support so far in helping to bring Light Meets Life into the world. It is important that we stay transparent with our fundraising campaign. We wanted you to rest assured that every cent of the money raised so far is parked safely in a bank account in the States, waiting until we start making some moves towards building Light Meets Life. We are excited to share with you all the new developments that are unfolding in the coming months.



The Center will be closed indefinitely for obvious reasons. There will be no courses, though if all goes according to plan, we hope to restart in 2021 with an even better and more varied schedule than ever before. Help us make this happen!

February Affirmation

I am serene

Am I peaceful through the chaos of this life? Through the ups and downs, I am serene, calm and with a clear mind. Through clarity, I see the truth and stay steady. I see the world through my meditation practice.



www.globalteahut.org

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

GLOBAL TEA HUT

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

