

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

December 2020

工夫茶

GONGFU TEA
EXPLORING TRADITION

Contents

Issue 107 / December 2020

GLOBAL TEA HUT

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE



AMRITA

This is a special month indeed. We have long held that Global Tea Hut magazine should step outside the bounds of our own lineage and brewing methods and focus on including other approaches and methods. Let's continue our series of issues on gongfu tea, this time diving deeper into the history of its sources. And what a tea to drink while we do!

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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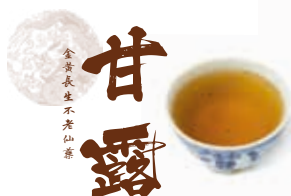
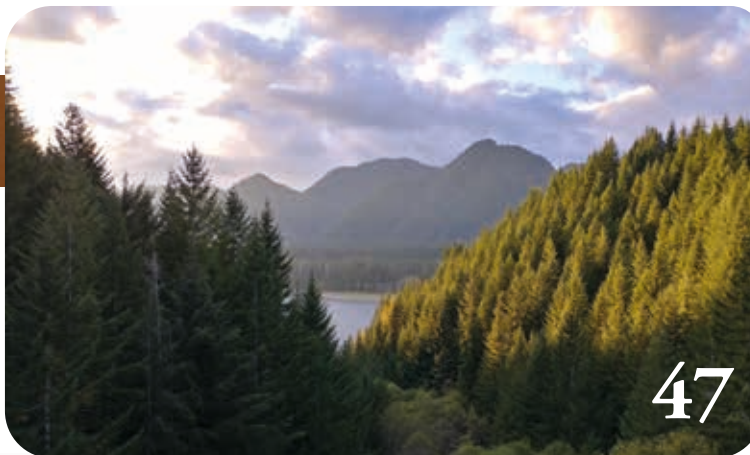
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recycled & recyclable



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From the editor

In December, the weather cools down in Taiwan and we start our weekly trips to the hot springs once again. Of course, this year we will have to monitor the situation and make sure it is safe, but it is amongst our favorite things to do all year long. We carry a thermos full of shou or shou and dian hong mixed and sit and soak while we drink tea, often staying for an outdoor lunch in the mountains afterwards. Outdoor tea is also great this time of year in Taiwan, as it is too hot at other times of the year. This is a great time to light some charcoal and dig into your aged puerh, roasted oolongs, aged oolongs and, of course, shou puerh.

The online Boiled Tea Course went terrifically! It was such a joy to produce this course, covering all three ways that we boil tea along with bonus lessons on water and fire, including charcoal instructions, and a live Q&A session as well. I really enjoyed the opportunity to share some boiled tea and methods with all of you who took the course. Boiling tea is my favorite brewing method and the best bowls of tea I have had in my life were found hours-deep into a boiled session. I have yet to come close to mastery in the boiling of tea, and sometimes I feel like I don't practice enough to even be proficient, which makes it awkward to step in front of a camera and teach these techniques. I did my best to share the methods, hoping that you will be able to take these techniques further than I ever could. If you want to learn more about boiled tea, the course will stay up indefinitely. Head over to www.teahutcourses.com to sign up. We also have an Intro to Cha Dao course if you are new to tea and looking to learn some ceremonial methods of preparing tea along with some ideas about incorporating a tea practice into your self-cultivation practice, or beginning a practice perhaps.

It really is a challenge to teach to a camera. I am so used to sitting in silence for at least three bowls, and usually longer, before we start learning about tea together. To just sit down and talk to... no one is a challenge. I hope to get better at it, though, as I can see that there are definite advantages to online courses: You can watch at your own pace, pause and take notes; rewatch lessons again as you practice, following along to get the hang of techniques; and, of course, the practice lands in your home, fitting into your space and schedule. This is great, as I feel that what we have to offer are techniques for you to make better and to make tea a practice of self-cultivation. These methods are then yours to use as you see fit, evolving them to your life and your betterment. We may discuss some context, history and philosophy in these courses as well, but all that is far less important than the brewing methods that you can use in your own life and tea to cultivate your own skill and wisdom.

We are hoping to turn now to two geeky whiteboard, classroom-style online courses: one on the Seven Genres of Tea and one on puerh specifically. In these courses, we will dive deep into all the groundwork you need to understand the tea world on an intellectual level, hopefully adding to your understanding of tea production, history and appreciation and opening new avenues of exploration and learning for you. We will announce these courses in the coming year.

This has been a hard year! Thankfully, we have had tea to help us reflect, focus on our inner work and try to be better humans in the face of so much upheaval. Of course, tea offers us a bit of solace in all of this as well. We wanted to end the year right, with a magical tea and an issue on a topic that we have been planning to cover for years: a deeper dive into the lineages of gongfu tea.

There are three main families of gongfu tea, each with many branches and lineages. Like any great method, gongfu tea has followed many rivers and streams, which all eventually lead back to one greater river in Chaoshou, which is the source of all gongfu tea brewing. We plan to devote an issue to each of the three families of lineages, covering the whole history of gongfu tea. In fact, we can ultimately return to these topics if you like learning about them (let us know). There is enough to devote several issues to each branch. Here we start with an overview of many traditions, focusing on the source: Chaoshou. And we have a magical aged oolong to go with our exploration and send us into the next decade in style!



—Further Reading—

This month, we recommend reading or rereading the Gongfu Experiments issue from May 2019 and doing as many of the experiments as you can. If you have already done them, it is always rewarding to revisit them and see if the results turn out the same again. You may learn something different or deepen your understanding.

TEA OF THE MONTH



ver the course of this month, we will be drinking a beautiful aged Baozhong tea that we call “Amrita,” which means “ambrosia.” It is the perfect nostalgic tea to look more deeply into the history and lineages of gongfu tea. This tea is from sometime in the 1990s and therefore at least twenty years old, but more likely it’s around twenty-five years old.

Let’s review some basics about Baozhong tea before we talk about Amrita. A long time ago, Baozhong (包種) tea was called “Pouchong” in English. The term literally means “wrapped” or “packaged” tea, since all Baozhong in the early days was wrapped up in paper squares. Such packaging was common for many types of oolong tea, including Cliff Tea, which is the forebear of Baozhong, as it is for most tea in Taiwan. (The oolongs we sell on our website are all packaged in this traditional way.) It is a special treat to see an old master package the 150-gram squares, going through the complex folds at lightning speed. Since the tea was often stored in these packets by ordinary tea drinkers, most tea lovers back in the day also knew how to fold and refold their packets.

The trees, farming methods and processing of Baozhong all came to Taiwan in the latter part of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). This striped oolong took root primarily in the Nankang (南港) and Wenshan (文山) regions of Taiwan. Originally, Baozhong was processed in the way all oolong was: with heavier oxidation and/or roast. In the late nineteenth century, a demand for greener teas split Baozhong production into what the market called “red water oolong (紅水烏龍)” and “green water oolong (清水烏龍).” Throughout the twentieth century, traditionally-processed Baozhong decreased in popularity, possibly due to the popularity of central Taiwanese ball oolongs like those from Dong Ding. By the 1990s, Baozhong was more famous as a green oolong than as a traditionally-processed striped oolong like Yancha.

Our Tea of the Month was also processed more lightly, but it was oxidized slightly more than most of the greener types, like August’s Tea of the Month, Meadow. It is well-aged at this point, so it is hard to know exactly what type of processing it went through. The increasing popularity of central Taiwanese “high-mountain oolong” over time

caused Baozhong teas to decrease in value. This has been hard for farmers, but it has created a positive effect as well since the lower value and popularity have caused a surge in more sustainable and organic tea production in the area. The reason for this is twofold: Firstly, the cost of agrochemicals raises the overall cost of production, so if your tea is not selling well and for good prices, it makes sense to shift to a more labor-intensive traditional farming method. When you aren’t trying to compete with a market demand for very specific flavor profiles, natural farming is ideal. Secondly, many farmers in the north have used organic, natural, sustainable tea production to carve out a niche for themselves in the greater Taiwanese market, offering people who care a tea that suits us. We have discussed several such farmers in previous issues.

Most oolong in Taiwan is not aged intentionally, and Amrita is no exception. Oolong is very different from puerh in terms of aging. Puerh ferments and oxidizes, so it needs air and humidity. Oolong, on the other hand, is just oxidizing. It does better with very little oxygen and no humidity—sealed up tight, in other words. Some people advocate re-roasting the tea every few years to remove humidity, but we don’t like this method and prefer tea that is just aged. This means that if you live in a place that is not ideal for puerh storage, it is probably great for oolong. The majority of tea was not sealed and stored intentionally, though; it was instead just cast aside in large bags or drums because it didn’t sell. This brings up two issues: Firstly, why didn’t it sell the year it was made? Was it lower quality? With Baozhong, this could be just a lack of interest, as most people want high-mountain tea. Secondly, it means humidity and too much air (usually). Amrita has some storage as well. It isn’t too bad, though. (We have had many that are way worse.) This lends it a sour note that you will have to brew around.

Amrita is sour and sweet with an uplifting Qi and a complex bouquet that unfolds sip by sip and cup by cup. It has depth and breadth and is starting to develop some aged flavors of herbs, caramel and sandalwood. If stored intentionally for another ten years, it will be a marvelous tea. We will put some packets up on the website if you are interested in getting more.



Amrita



Northern Taiwan



Aged Baozhong Tea



Taiwanese



~300-500 Meters



甘露



Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

This month, we are learning all about gongfu brewing, and like most oolongs, Amrita only truly shines when brewed gongfu. You can try your hand at a Chaozhou-style brew, or you can brew this tea in any gongfu method you have the teaware and know-how to do. Amrita can also be prepared leaves in a bowl. Add just a few leaves (fewer than you are used to) and it will be lovely.

Amrita is actually a very difficult tea to brew. Ordinarily, we don't choose many such teas for our Teas of the Month, knowing that readers around the world practice different brewing methods, approach tea differently and use different water, fire and teaware. We usually want to find teas that anyone can brew with any teaware, no matter where you are in the world. But for this gongfu issue, we wanted to offer you a gauge to test your brewing. When we say that Amrita is difficult to brew, what we mean is that it produces vastly different experiences depending on your brewing method. It also won't really shine its brightest unless it is prepared just right—within a narrow margin of error. It can be sour, due to storage, if it is prepared underwhelmingly. Of course, all tea can be improved with brewing skills, just as any dish can be made to shine as one develops one's cooking skills, but some dishes just have a much narrower margin you have to navigate through in order to make a shining example versus a mess.

This means you can sit back and enjoy it for what it is (there is nothing wrong with that approach) or you can try your best to hit the mark and see where your gongfu skills lie. Don't make it stressful, but rather a fun way to gauge (steeping by steeping) if you can first of all recognize when you are getting closer to its ideal range and then second if you can adjust your brewing to move further into that shiny range. When you get it right, the sourness will be tamed and a very rich bouquet of aged oolong will start to shine through.

As with most areas of gongfu tea, hitting the range for Amrita will have a lot to do with temperature. In fact, sensitive teas like our Tea of the Month can help us to experiment with temperature because changing between different methods and teaware have a much stronger and more obvious effect on the tea. It is easy to notice what temperature is doing at almost any stage, in other words. This, of course, begins with the type of fire we use (electric, gas or charcoal), then the kettle and the clay composition of our teapot. It also moves into brewing method as well. Are we showering the pot? Before, after, both or neither? Prewarming the cups? Using a pitcher or not? All of these affect temperature as much as fire and teaware. And Amrita is a great way to experience very clearly what each of these elements do, as She will change dramatically as you alter any of the methods or materials. A tip that can help is to make sure the zisha teapot is very, very well pre-heated before you add the tea leaves. This is ideal for any tea, but especially important for sensitive teas like Amrita.

Another small pointer that can be helpful when dealing with aged oolongs that were not stored perfectly and are therefore prone to sourness is to make sure that you decant every last drop of the tea for each and every steeping. It is worth the extra time and patience to hold the pot and let every single last drop drip out. You can even give it a shake a few times to get the last bits out. Leaving excess water of any kind in the pot will increase the sourness of aged teas such as Amrita. If you like, you can do an experiment where you do one session with this method and one without. It may not be effective enough to switch back and forth in a single session, but two sessions, one with each method, will demonstrate this very clearly.



Gongfu

茶道



Leaves in a Bowl

Water: spring water or best bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: high heat, fish-eye, 95°C

Brewing Methods: gongfu or leaves in a bowl (gongfu is ideal)

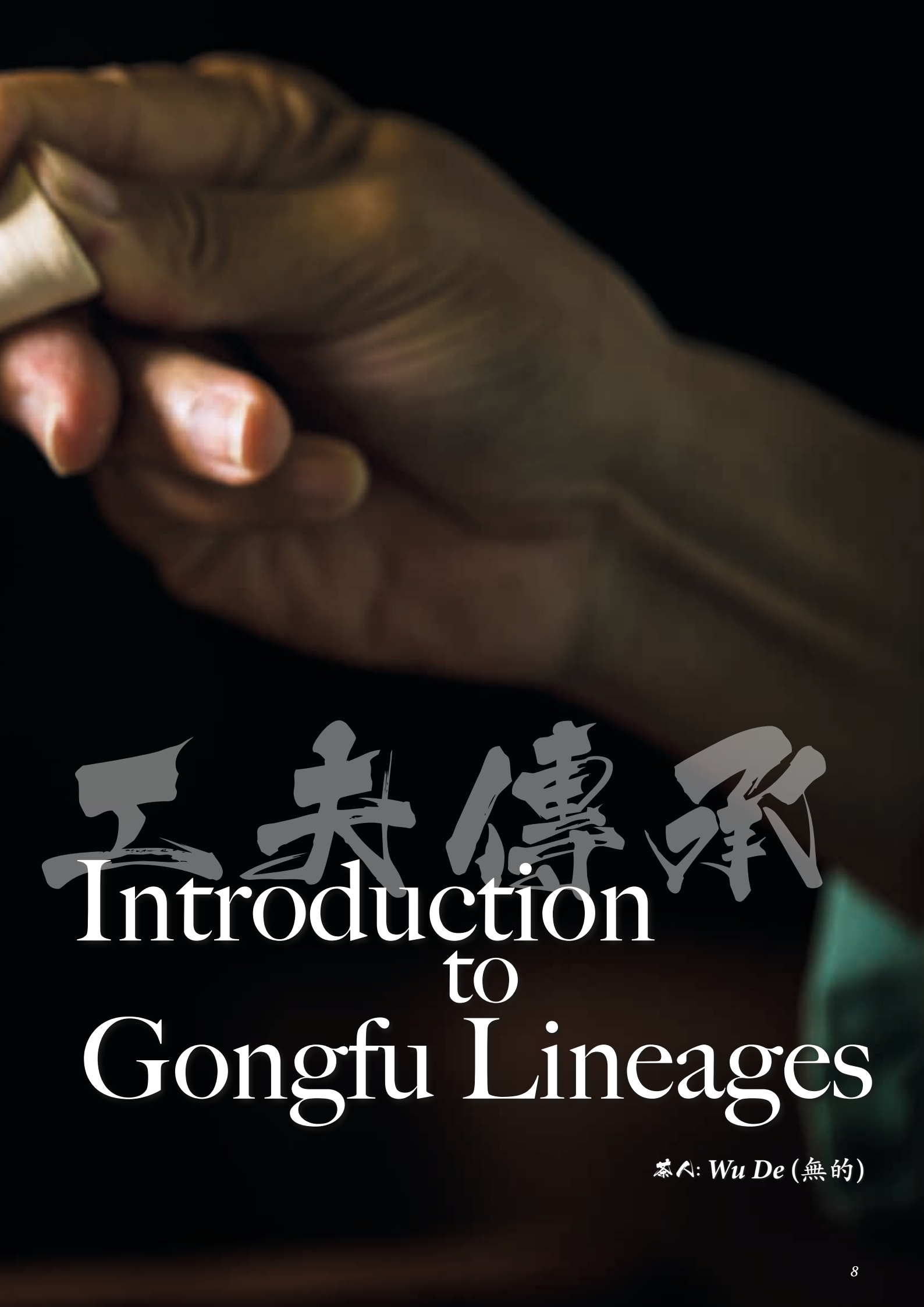
Steeping: long steeping, then 2–3 flashes, then start growing longer

Patience: 20–25 steepings (gongfu)

茶 Try making sure to extract every last drop from the pot each steeping to mitigate the sourness in this tea. Also, try showering the teapot both before and after steeping to maintain temperature.







功夫傳承

Introduction to Gongfu Lineages

拳人: Wu De (無的)



The lineages of gongfu are a complicated family tree that branches far too often to properly map beyond a few generations. After you move up or down the tree, the branches separate too often to record them all, as too many teachers are involved, and the boundaries are far too loose. This is as it should be, since this reflects the nature of the Leaf itself, which sits at the center of any brewing tradition.

Having open borders is one of the beauties of tea as a plant: it infuses into the water around it and also absorbs whatever surrounds it. Tea should not be stored in the kitchen because it is so absorbent it will eventually smell and taste like the spices around it. Tea trees planted near camphor will have the flavor of camphor every time they are brewed, which is sometimes done intentionally in Yunnan. And, of course, tea also infuses into the water, giving its essence to create the liquor we enjoy. This steeping-seeping-giving quality is the very reason we discovered this marvelous plant thousands of years ago, and how to extract the essence from the Leaf is what each and every tradition of brewing method is, in fact, handing down—from boiling to whisking, to the lineages of gongfu tea, each is handing down decades or cen-

turies of experience, technology, wares and methods to extract specific qualities in various ways from the leaves.

Tea's boundaries are porous in both directions. Is it any wonder, then, that the lineages of tea are the same? There was never a need to record specific teacher-to-student lines in detail outside of Zen traditions which were doing that already for other reasons. Tea just infuses out, influencing all around it. And the lineages of tea are absorbent as well, meaning that as gongfu tea branched, for example, new branches formed by absorbing methods and wares from their cousins, perhaps bringing back something that had been cut from a lineage long ago or adding something new from another lineage altogether. And as information and travel have opened in the modern era, there is even more mutual influence between methods, absorbing and diffusing into one another as techniques, wares and philosophy are borrowed from one lineage to the next. As we shall see later, the Taiwanese gongfu tradition is a good example of adaptation and adoption across lines and boundaries, as it has come to absorb not only aspects of all the gongfu traditions, but teaware and methods from several Japanese lineages as well (using lots of their teaware, for example).

Traditions that do not preserve the wisdom and experience of the past will not be effective and useful, but traditions that do not innovate will not stay relevant and will then die out. This is the delicate balance that all traditions face as they are handed down through time—a need to reinvent themselves, ideally each generation, without doing so in a way that tramples the very techniques, wisdom and experience they have created to hand down. Obviously, it is very easy for the balance to tip in either direction, which we see in many types of traditions—be they philosophical, religious, cultural or based in the arts and crafts. It's worth discussing the tipping off balance in both directions so that we can prevent it in our practice.

On one end of the scale, things fall off balance when the tradition fears innovation and starts protecting against change too vigorously. This is common. The tradition then becomes rigid and disembodied. People start to forget why things are done the way they are and just do them “because.” If you do not allow for innovation, a tradition becomes dead and disembodied. People stop practicing it, or at least doing so with heart. A tradition only lives in the flesh and bones of the ones practicing it now—the current generation,



in other words. They keep the past alive, in other words. And they won't do so with the passion and love that is required to keep the blood of a tradition flowing if the tradition is not relevant to *their* lives—the landscape and challenges they face in their time. The lack of innovation could be philosophical, it could be the map, the technology or the methods. An ancient map won't be of much use, no matter how wise and revered it is, if it no longer maps the contours of the world. Our maps must change as our world does. They also must change as our understanding of the world grows, incorporating new ideas and truths, areas of exploration the mapmakers of yore couldn't have even imagined. An example of this in tea is perhaps the inclusion of more scientific research and understanding of the chemistry of the Leaf, which was not a part of the worldview of those who started brewing gongfu tea. In traditional tea processing terminology, the term “*fa xiao* (發酵)” referred to oxidation and fermentation both, and still does in some rural areas. This is because farmers back in the day had no way of understanding the difference since it is microscopic and chemical. The microbial aspect of tea processing and of terroir is an expansion of the tea map into areas no traditional Chajin

traveled and the new maps must innovate to include this new territory.

Beyond maps, technology has also evolved, as have our lifestyles. Many of us, for example, require electric heat at some point in our tea journeys. Not every location in the modern world is charcoal-friendly. Understanding which type of electric burner to use for gongfu tea is a whole area of exploration that wouldn't have existed in a traditional curriculum, but is necessary if gongfu tea is to stay relevant.

For these reasons and more, a tradition must be able to adapt and change, incorporating new ideas, teaware and methods into itself as it grows and meets new environments, people and lifestyles so that each generation will practice as passionately and devotedly as the previous ones and thereby continue the tradition, handing down the precious wisdom and experience of past teachers, which is invaluable. I could sit on an island and brew tea all day for eighty years and not even come close to figuring out a fraction of what has been taught to me, as it is an accumulation of wisdom and experience cultivated over centuries of tea brewing. Without that, we would be forced to re-figure everything out from scratch each generation, which would be hopeless. But we must be able to

take that wisdom and apply it to *our* tea and *our* lives so that it is meaningful to us!

Turning to the other side of the scale, we see that there is good reason for a tradition to fear innovation as well. If innovation happens too quickly or for the wrong reasons, the traditions also die, drowned in newness that is all unrooted and unwise. There are many examples of this in all areas of our modern life as well. The issue is that adaptation is ideally guided by understanding. If you don't yet fully understand the tradition in a mature way, including both its philosophical underpinnings and worldview, and if you don't have the benefit of a long-term practice that affords technical insight, you may cut something out or add something that damages what is worth preserving and you may do so without even knowing it. One cannot simply show up to Tai Chi class and tell the instructor on day one that the method doesn't resonate with one's life and then go and change it all over the place to suit one's lifestyle. The result won't be Tai Chi. It will be random movements and missing many essential truths that are worth preserving, and that doesn't include the internal aspects that will also be lost in the process of such cursory change.

A cursory sketch of history traced across the modern world will reveal that we often repeat our mistakes due to forgetfulness. Without living traditions, cultural heritage and the wisdom and experience of not only the elderly, but also their ancestors, we are doomed to be distracted constantly by novelty and repeat our errors rather than learning from them. In such a world, novelty is valued above genius. If one woman announces her discovery of the cure for cancer and a second comes to the same conclusion independently, utilizing her equal genius, no one will remember, let alone value, the second woman's intelligence or ingenuity. She will be forgotten in the face of who came first.

In a general sense, you could construct a meaningful argument that we have enough technology and understanding to make this world green, bright and peaceful. We have taken some steps in that direction, but so long as the ship is not steered by the wisdom and experience of our past, we will continue to lose our way. And as it is on a large scale, so it is in the small: when tea brewing lineages cater to tea business, focusing on innovation, the internal, spiritual/philosophical teachings are the first to go, as we have seen, then the practical importance follows suit and people are moved by the current fashion, dictated by market trends, and often do not understand the history of the teaware and brewing methods they use.

We must first understand the traditional ways *before* we start adapting and innovating them. In that way, it won't be the whim of fashion changing the tradition, dropping things that are necessary or adding things that aren't without even knowing it. If we first practice the traditional way for some years, until it permeates our muscle memory and we understand it thoroughly, then it won't be an external force acting on the tradition, but the tradition itself changing and growing from *within*! If I practice for many years, when I reach maturity, I will be a living representative of the tradition, speaking and acting on its behalf. By then I will also love it, and I will be a responsible steward, making the decision to adapt in ways that advance and improve the tradition without sacrificing any of its core values.

In fact, this is how all tradition, especially indigenous societies, functioned: the young were guided lovingly by their elders who had matured and grown within the culture, mythology, spirituality, ceremony and even practical life wisdom surrounding toolmaking and farming. Eventually, after years of learning the old ways, the responsibility was handed to the youth in initiation ceremonies. By then, they understood the old ways and loved them. They could then responsibly change them, growing and adapting them to suit changes in life and the world (or understanding of the world) and do so without damaging the tradition, as they *were* the tradition. The outside world can come and quickly stomp away the embers of such traditions, enticing their youth away from their traditional languages, beliefs and lifestyles. Only the youth can be seduced by the false promises and vacuous "happiness" such plastic, mass-produced, cookie-cutter lives offer. Compared to the richness of belonging to tradition and wisdom, guided by those who loved those who love you and want you to mature into a capable and responsible adult human who can care for the wisdom and change and alter it, guiding the generation towards a living wisdom that can then be handed down to the next—compared to that we are lost.

If the ancestors of a lineage are wise, they teach how to innovate as part of what is handed down. They teach us to avoid adaptations that favor what is quick and convenient over what is well done and ethically sound. Convenience will never make any human as happy as a job well done, nor provide the same satisfaction. With some few exceptions, a handmade anything is better and more enjoyable. A meal prepared from veggies we planted, tended and harvested ourselves by the sweat of our own brows will always taste and feel better. Egoic innovation just because you want to do it "my way" is immature. It is a characteristic of youth. The young want to be seen, to stand out, to shine bright and attract. The youth long to glow above all else and therefore like what is new and shiny over what is old and worn. They must be guided by loving wisdom that understands, having passed through the various stages of learning—

guided to maturity and responsibility, care for others and for a place, the earth and the lineage. In this way, they are guided to true joy—the bliss of belonging and being a part of something that began before us and will end after us...

This analogy applies equally to any tradition, be it martial arts, Buddhist meditation or tea. We must walk this fine line of preserving the old while responsibly incorporating the new to keep growing and changing our Way of Tea to suit the world we live in, passing on what we learned and what we added to the next generation so that they can steward it as well as add to and grow it in *their* own way.

Before we introduce the main branches of the gongfu tree of lineages, it may be worthwhile to review the beginnings of gongfu tea in general. It is always a great idea to review, for repetition is a big part of how understanding is passed down...

✿ *The skill of pouring is one of the deep and powerful traditions that has been lost to most modern brewers in favor of the convenience a pitcher offers. A pitcher can make it easier to distribute even liquor to each cup, since the liquor that comes out later is thicker, but achieving uniformity by hand, through skill is a big part of mastery (i.e., "gongfu") and taking this out reduces temperature, adds extra instruments to the table and also prevents the brewer from bringing the cups back in every steeping, which has both practical and philosophical significance—the flow of the cups in and out is the breath of the ceremony, signifying our oneness and our distinction from each other. We are one heart; we are separate beings...*



THE ORIGINS OF GONGFU TEA

As we have often discussed in these pages, “gongfu (工夫)” means “mastery through self-discipline.” Interestingly, there are two different characters for the “gong” part of “gongfu”—either “工夫” or “功夫.” One emphasizes inner power (discipline) and the other is about long-term work and dedication. The latter is often used with reference to Buddhist meditation and the lasting effects of disciplined self-cultivation. We see both characters amongst tea writings and find that the combination of the two captures the depth of what “gongfu tea” means: a dedicated, focused practice of self-cultivation through tea.

Nowadays, the term “gongfu tea” has become generic, often referring to any brewing method, whether it is skillful or motivated by dedicated practice or not. To us, this is the worst use of the term, as it reduces gongfu tea to meaninglessness, suggesting that no matter how one brews tea, it is gongfu tea so long as it includes “Chinese” implements. If there is no intention or focus devoted to the craft, if there is no cultivation of skill towards finer cups of tea and if there is no discipline, how can we rightly call such a practice “gongfu tea”? The method and implements are less relevant than this spirit of skillful cultivation of technique and disciplined focus on the craft. So long as one has a true passion for tea and is working to discipline oneself and cultivate one’s tea knowledge and brewing skill, that is gongfu tea.

The term “gongfu” also has another meaning as well (I know this can be confusing, but it only reflects the depths and profound historicity of tea, which is inspiring): it also refers to a particular cluster of lineages that all began in Chaozhou (潮州). Originally, “gongfu tea” referred to the brewing techniques of southern China exclusively. These techniques were born in Chaozhou and then quickly spread to Fujian and Taiwan, where they evolved down several branches. These brewing techniques began in the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). At that time, most Chajin in China were brewing

tea in large pots with large cups, allowing the tea to steep for longer times. In fact, this Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) method was the common brewing style Westerners first encountered when they began trading with China, which is why Western countries often brew tea in this so-called “brown betty” style even today: larger teapots, long steep times while people chat and bigger cups (of course, Westerners added a handle to the cup and milk and sugar to the tea). In those days, gongfu tea was a local brewing method known only to the tea lovers in the south.

The Birth of Skill

Understanding the origins of “gongfu tea” in terms of the local brewing traditions that began in Chaozhou, as opposed to the more general use of the word as “skill/mastery through self-discipline,” can be helpful in one’s practice. Of course, discussing how and why something as culturally nebulous as a tea brewing method arose will always result in over-simplification. First of all, these lineages did not arise spontaneously out of nothing, but rather grew out of existing tea traditions—evolving and developing out of older tea methods. When it comes to history, there is always more context and more to the story than can be elucidated by an entire book on the subject, let alone a small article such as this. Human behavior and society is complicated, so let us approach this summary of how and why gongfu tea evolved in southern China as just that: a summary—keeping in mind that more of the tale will be left untold...

In our brief summary, we are going to cover three different factors that contributed to the development of gongfu tea in southern China and their relevance to us as practitioners of either a lineage derived from these directly or at least as tea lovers devoted to cultivating ourselves and our tea brewing skills. It is worth repeating that these three factors are not the whole story of gongfu tea, though they are important

chapters indeed: martial arts, poverty and oolong tea. Let’s discuss each one by one.

Martial Arts

Martial arts play an important role in the development of these brewing methods because many tea lovers have been practicing Qigong for centuries. The two practices evolved together, one influencing the other. In fact, we spoke earlier about the two characters used for “gong” in “gongfu tea.” The first character “功” may be derived from martial arts, which is a kind of gongfu (depending on which “gongfu” you use). In the West, we are more familiar with the Cantonese version of “gongfu,” which is “kungfu.” Since most of the masters who developed gongfu tea were practicing martial arts, the practical and philosophical aspects of Qigong and other martial arts are also incredibly important in gongfu brewing.

Philosophically, the martial artists brought their cosmology and energetic anatomy to their tea practice. This means that the Chinese cosmology greatly influenced this brewing method and we should make an effort to study things like Yin and Yang, the Five Elements and the three treasures of Jing (精), Qi (氣) and Shen (神) in order to contextualize our tea practice. (We have covered these topics in past issues of Global Tea Hut, so it may be worthwhile to do a search in the archives. There are also many wonderful books on these topics.) Understanding this philosophical foundation influences many aspects of a tea practice, including, but not limited to, selecting a tea that is in harmony with the weather, the season and the energetic needs of one’s guests. It also facilitates a deeper understanding of the medicinal properties of tea in terms of these traditional approaches, as opposed to a scientifically-based allopathic approach to tea research (which also has value, obviously). This philosophical framework also helps connect us to

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the lineage of Chajin who have come before us and facilitates dialogue, since it arms us with all kinds of jargon we can use to learn about and express our understanding of tea in general and certain teas or sessions specifically.

The martial arts element of gongfu tea also influence one's practice on a much more fundamental level, as all the movements of skilled gongfu brewing were born out of the understanding of the body (physically and energetically) cultivated in those ancient techniques. Tea movements are derived directly from martial arts, in other words. (At least in gongfu tea.) This covers everything from how we lift the pot to how we decant the tea, and everything from the muscles in the arm used to make circular motions to the energetic flow of Qi through our beings as we do so. Let's look at one example that will be relevant now and later on in our discussion: conservation of energy.

Preserving energy is important in martial arts for both philosophical and energetic reasons. In Chinese cosmology and medical theory, there is an idea similar to our Western idea of entropy, in which systems break down over time and faster if they use more energy. According to this theory, based on an observation of the energetics of Nature, the more energy used, the greater and faster the degradation of the system. (This is a relevant observation in light of the pace of modern life.) Chinese people observed that the animals and plants that live long, like tortoises or redwood trees, all move slowly. They realized that conserving energy created peace and tranquility as well as the potential for longevity—and living long is important to a person devoted to self-cultivation not so that they can enjoy the pleasures of this realm for longer, but rather so that they can dedicate more time to their spiritual development for the good of all beings.

This preservation and economy of energy is also practically relevant in martial arts, as it is in life. When an opponent attacks us, the ideal is that we are not there when their fist lands, so they strike air. Second best is to deflect, using their own momentum and energy to lead them away from us—guiding their energy with as little of ours as possible. Finally, the worst solution is to block/defend, as this injures us as well. And this is all as true of martial conflict as it is of the challenges and vicissitudes we all face in life: it is always ideal to “not be there” when the fist of life lands, meaning that if we are transparent and egoless, the “offense” has nowhere to land.

When we pour tea using as little of our own power as possible, the tea pours itself effortlessly. The less my muscles and energy are used, the less of me is in the tea. This means the signal of the tea is clearer and more potent, free of my ego or desire.



Like a good audio cable, we then channel a pure and clean tea sound to our guests. The less of my mind, body or energy is in the cup, the purer it will be. For that, I have to get out of the way, stilling my heart and using as little energy as possible. When my movements are frugal and gentle, I also disturb the tea less, which means it will be calmer and smoother, less ruffled—like a slowly drawn breath aligned with movement in Qigong. Practically speaking, this influences all areas of brewing gongfu tea, like allowing the pot to “fall” naturally when we pour into the cups, drawing back as opposed to pushing, creating smoother and more effortless tea. Such tea is always finer. And such smooth and fine cups also bring us to the second important factor that led to the creation of gongfu brewing in southern China, which is poverty. The philosophical and practical influence of martial arts extends to Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, all of which guided the entire history of tea. Different gongfu lineages attribute more or less to these traditions.

Poverty

The conservation of energy that we just discussed in the previous section could be thought of as a kind of poverty—poverty of movement and energy expenditure. But moving onwards, this aspect of gongfu tea has a spiritual and an earthly side to it. On the down-to-earth level, poverty means just that. The people in southern China were poor. And all human action, whether individual or social, has an economic element. In other words, we are all, in part, economically motivated, as are the societies we create.

The brewing methods that were popular throughout the Ming and into the Qing Dynasty were not very economical, involving large, ornate teapots and cups that required large amounts of tea for each session. The people of southern China wanted a brewing method that utilized small amounts of tea that could be prepared in a way that increased the number of steepings you get, meaning that one could be satisfied with far less tea brewed over a longer time in many short steepings. The number of steep-

ings we get from a tea is called its “patience (耐泡).” The patience of any tea, of course, also has to do with the production of the tea itself, and will be determined by the terroir and varietal, as well as the processing method and even the skill of the farmer who created it. But tea arrives to us unfinished, like the ingredients in a fine dish of food that must be completed by the chef. The quality of the vegetables also depends on how they were grown and by whom, but only a great cook can bring out their quality, fulfilling their potential. Similarly, in order to get the best steepings, and more of them, we must use the proper brewing method and do so with skill. Patience is therefore partially dependent on the method and skill of the brewer, which means that cultivating brewing skills will extend one’s sessions over more cups, which leads to the same degree of satisfaction with less tea, and that in turn means that we save money.

In his seminal work, the *Tea Sutra* (茶經), the “Tea Saint” Lu Yu (陸羽) said that the “spirit of tea is frugality.” This can be interpreted in many ways: that the essence of tea is conservation of energy, as we discussed earlier, for example, or perhaps that simplicity is the true soul of tea. All of these workings of his aphorism are true and potentially enrich our tea practice. The old sage is also highlighting the spiritual dimension of the poverty within a tea practice, which it shares in common with most spiritual traditions of the world.

Jesus and Buddha both held poverty as central to their teachings, worldviews and practices. But it is worth understanding on many levels, from the surface to the depths of what these great masters were proposing when they taught poverty had nothing to do with economics. By poverty, the Buddha did not mean a lack of money or goods (and neither did Lu Yu, for that matter). As a spiritual practice, poverty has nothing to do with how much money one has. If being poor resulted in wisdom and spiritual cultivation, this would be a much merrier world indeed. One can be poor and miserable, full of desire for things one doesn’t have and jealous of those who have such things. Economic inequality also causes all kinds of individual and social challenges, and this suffering is

not easy to ameliorate. In fact, much of the world’s political debates over the last few centuries have revolved around the dilemmas caused by a desire to protect liberty and also create more equality, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive but are certainly a real trial for us to sort out—as the news makes obvious. So if the masters weren’t talking about a lack of money or resources, then what did they mean by saying that poverty was central to their practice?

Spiritual poverty is all about two things: cultivating a spirit of simplicity and humility, and consciously, actively renouncing worldly desires. Tea teaches us to find the extraordinary in the ordinary. There is a Zen saying that “nothing is more uncommon than to see the uncommon in the common, and most humans have become so commonplace that they require the extraordinary to see the uncommon.” Most of our lives will be spent in simple situations, pursuing ordinary tasks, not in the bigger-than-life peaks we occasionally find. If we can learn to appreciate doing nothing (sitting around drinking tea), we can then live richer and fuller lives, content with whatever is happening—be it great or small. Actually, we are surrounded by miracles all the time, if we but look with clear eyes, for even the most mundane activity like drinking tea or doing laundry is actually contextualized in a giant and incredibly awesome cosmos full of supernovas, comets, northern lights and all the great and small magnificence that is this amazing world. Poverty is also about renouncing worldly desires, which must be an intentional and active practice as opposed to a circumstantial lack. This practice of poverty is, in other words, more about our internal orientation than about what we “have” or “don’t have,” since the great masters understood that none of us really “have” anything. We simplify our hearts, not our environment (though the two may harmonize in the end).

In truth, when we say that poverty motivated the creation of gongfu brewing, we mean that this technique evolved out of an earthly desire to save money by brewing tea in a way that increases patience, using small pots and cups and a method that brings greater satisfaction with less tea, and also a spiritual poverty based on simplicity



and renunciation of worldly desire. My master always says that if you are not moving towards using less and less tea, you are in contradiction to the Dao, which is Nature. He means, in essence, that the Way is a returning, a softness and that if our sensitivity is truly increasing, then we need less and less tea. If the medicine is working, in other words, our need for it should decrease. This echoes the words of Sen No Rikyu: “Imagine your life without tea; if it is any different, you have yet to understand tea!”

Oolong Tea

The creation of oolong tea is the beginning of gongfu tea. And no factor is more relevant to the tea brewing in the south of China than oolong tea. In point of fact, the term “gongfu tea” must, once again, be complicated, because the term originally referred not to a brewing method, but rather to oolong tea, which wasn’t called “oolong” in the early days. Oolong tea began in northern Fujian’s Wuyi Mountain (武夷山). The tea from Wuyi is today called “Cliff Tea (岩茶),” and Cliff Tea was made with such complicated processing that required so much skill and lifelong discipline to produce well that it was called “gongfu tea.” Even today, it takes decades of intense focus and practice to master the production of fine Cliff Tea (or any oolong tea for that matter).

So, in the early days the “gongfu” in “gongfu tea” still referred to mastery through self-discipline; it just denoted skill in terms of tea processing rather than in the preparation of the finished tea. However, as time went on, a method of brewing this masterfully-made tea was needed. In order to honor the craft and devotion of well-made oolong, it needed to be brewed properly. Chajin sought to honor the hard work and skill of the tea masters who made the tea by devoting themselves with great focus and dedication to developing brewing methods that would bring out the best qualities of this tea, and thereby fulfill its potential. Once again, we might turn to the wonderful analogy of cooking to better understand this: Let’s say we had a friend who came into possession of heirloom tomato seeds from a heritage that was hundreds of years old. And let’s also imagine that beyond just amazing seeds, our friend Farmer Susan was also incredibly devoted to her lifelong work of farming tomatoes. She worked tirelessly to create the perfect growing conditions for her tomatoes, refining the already spectacular seeds and genetic heritage to new heights. And then, continuing our fantasy, let’s suppose we did something solid for Susan and she wanted to return the favor, so she gave us a few of the best tomatoes from that year’s crop. Would we then want to casually chop up such tomatoes and toss them into a salad? Probably not. We would want to hon-

or all the heritage of the seeds (and their keepers over generations) as well as the hard work of Susan by crafting those tomatoes into something spectacular. And if we lacked the cooking skills to do so, we would probably invite a friend over to help. When you think of it in these terms, you can easily understand why Chajin of the past developed gongfu tea brewing to prepare gongfu tea, honoring the heritage of the tea trees and hard-won mastery of the producers by brewing the tea to its greatest potential. Over time, the term “gongfu tea” was associated more with the brewing than the processing.

Just because gongfu tea brewing is bound to oolong tea doesn’t mean we cannot successfully brew other types of tea this way, but it does help explain where this brewing method came from. And together with martial arts and poverty, we can contemplate the implications of this vast heritage of brewing methods. Understanding the drive that motivated these techniques connects us to those who passed these methods on to us and also helps us align our spirits with the practice. More importantly, the implications of what created gongfu tea brewing have real practical significance that can drastically improve our ability to make a fine cup of tea that transcends the ordinary. The heritage of gongfu tea also pushes us to excel and discipline ourselves in the practice, which results in the dedication that makes our tea practice worthy of the title “gongfu.”

GONGFU LINEAGES

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There are three main families of gongfu tea lineages: Chaozhou, Shao An and Taiwan. Some people call the Taiwan family “Taiwan/Yixing,” as Taiwan had a strong influence on Yixing brewing due to the popularity of Yixing teapots in the 1970s and ’80s. In fact, Taiwan has really had a strong influence throughout China in terms of tea brewing methods. These three brewing methods all come from a parent lineage in Chaozhou. But it is uncertain how much the current version of Chaozhou brewing resembles the early days. Different authors have varying opinions on the matter.

This separation into three families is not really geographical either. Many people in Taiwan, especially in the south, still practice gongfu tea that resembles Chaozhou or Shao An brewing more than Taiwanese. In fact, many Taiwanese tea people recognize this as “Old Man Tea.” However, it is hard to decide whether to categorize their brewing as Chaozhou, Shao An or maybe just an older version of Taiwanese tea that didn’t adapt in the ways that modern Taiwanese tea has.

One could actually subdivide these families further and it would be polite to do so, at least including the vibrant and important tea cultures and brewing methods of Hong Kong and Malaysia, which are derivative of the Chaozhou and Shao An styles, but have since evolved in their own directions, bringing their own color and innovations to gongfu brewing. Since our lineage is Malaysian, we have included a discussion of this in the following pages. Some authors also like to include a separate Anxi brewing method, since that region also developed unique brewing styles early on.

It may be worthwhile to discuss some of the distinctions in each family, though it should be noted that the further back one travels in time, the more these lineages start to resemble one another, merging into the parent sources of each and every one of them. These

are just a round sketch. As we have noted earlier, there are many branches and variations in style, method, aesthetics and teaware.

Chaozhou Style

Chaozhou gongfu tea is characterized by tiny cups. The original gongfu cups from the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) are very, very small—thimble-sized. This is because oolong tea is better when consumed in small sips. The next time you are enjoying an oolong, try to take as small of a sip as you possibly can, allowing as little tea liquor into the mouth as possible. You may notice a difference. This type of tea brewing involves small pots and a large concentration of leaves in the pot for very, very fast steepings—called “flash” steepings. Some traditions even crush up some of the leaves, mixing crushed with whole leaves to really pack the pot. Usually, only three cups are used no matter how many guests there are, and only three steepings are served in some branches. Some traditions use a teaboat for the cups and the pot, while others use small ceramic or pewter tea sinks for one or the other. Many traditions wash the cups in other cups, dipping them into the water of another cup and spinning. It is common for a small sidehandle kettle and charcoal stove to be used, called a “*diao* (铫)” or “*yu shu wei* (玉書煨).” These are carried on from the olden days when it was understood that boiling the water for each steeping or two fresh would result in better tea, which requires great skill to time properly. The tea is then decanted directly into the cups, following the “general’s patrol/role call,” which are circular movements to distribute the tea since the liquor that comes out later is always thicker/stronger. The “patrol” is decanting the liquor and the “role call” is shaking out the last drips. To achieve uniformity across the cups requires great skill.

Shao An Style

Shao An is a place in Fujian where gongfu tea brewing became popular very early on. It seems to be a simplified version of Chaozhou brewing, though the two are very similar in method and wares. Shao An brewing also uses a small pot and cups, but only uses a teaboat for the pot. The cups are then in a boat or a ceramic or pewter tea sink (most often ceramic in Fujian). The tea leaves are not crushed and fewer are used, creating a more moderate liquor. The tea leaves are placed on paper and in some traditions roasted over the charcoal just before brewing. The roast is very light and is said to remove poor storage or other unwanted elements from the tea. There is no limit to the cups used or the number of steepings. Shao An style often uses a ceramic or tin overhand kettle on a charcoal stove instead of a sidehandle. The cups are sometimes washed by rotating or, as with Chaozhou styles, spun within other cups. The teapot is showered before and after steeping and the tea is then decanted directly into the cups, following the general’s patrol/role call.

Taiwan Style

The Taiwanese style has changed much more than any other style of gongfu brewing, distinguishing itself more than the other families. One of the two main innovations was the introduction of a pitcher (*cha hai*, 茶海) in the late 1970s or early ’80s. The “fairness cup (*gong bei*, 公杯),” as it is also called, is used to distribute liquor to the cups, so the teapot is first decanted into a pitcher and then distributed to the cups. These pitchers sometimes also have a strainer over them to catch leaf bits. The pitcher evolved from earlier styles of tea brewing that came from Japan, which used



two Yixing pots—one as the pot and the other as a “*yuzamashi*” to cool the water down and then serve as a pitcher. There is also strong evidence that the British creamer for milk influenced the addition of pitchers into tea brewing. There are no set number of cups or steepings. The cups are often washed casually, just by rinsing without any rotation. Taiwanese tea can be wet or dry, meaning that the teapot is showered or it isn’t. When dry, the pot is often placed on a tea pillow instead of within a teaboat. Large tea sinks are also often used, and large kettles to boot. Taiwanese style favors long sessions, with big kettles and many steepings. Many traditions in Taiwan also use an “aroma cup (*wen xiang bei*, 聞香杯).” The tea liquor is first decanted into these tall, slender cups and then

dumped into an ordinary small drinking cup. The aroma cup is then used to appreciate the fragrances of the evaporated oils in the tea. Some traditions pour from the aroma cup, while others place the drinking cup on top of the aroma cup and flip them over while holding a seal, then releasing the aroma cup upward (the way you could flip an omelet with a plate held over the pan). Some tea scholars debate whether the aroma cups are from Anxi, but most suggest Taiwan.

Throughout the communist era (post-1949), Mainland Chinese abandoned their traditional culture more and more, culminating in the Cultural Revolution. Most people therefore brewed tea in glasses or thermoses. However, in recent years, cultural freedom has increased in China and

they have started brewing tea again, mostly importing and adapting the Taiwanese style. Many Taiwanese tea teachers have been offering classes in China over the last two decades and the influence is therefore widespread. Of course, China then influences how other tea lovers around the world brew tea, as many people travel there in search of tea, which is why versions of the Taiwanese style are the most prominent around the world.

It cannot be stressed enough that many of these distinctions bleed together nowadays, with distinctly Shao An methods or wares used in Chaozhou, etc...





Gongfu & Wuyi Cliff Tea



茶人: Master Tsai Yizhe (蔡奕哲)

We often hear members of the older generation say that when it comes to brewing methods, the gongfu tea methods of Tingzhou, Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Chaozhou are the best. But what is “gongfu tea”? And what does it have to do with Mount Wuyi and Cliff Tea?

For many years, I have poured all my efforts into the preservation of tea mountains, so I’ve had many opportunities to research Cliff Tea on Mount Wuyi. Thanks to this destined affinity with tea, I’ve also drunk tea many times with friends from all over who have visited Mount Wuyi and met many Cliff Tea experts. Among them have been quite a few gongfu tea teachers from all over Fujian and Guangdong, so we had the opportunity to learn from one another.

In recent times, I’ve had several important invitations to events in Taiwan and from the mainland where I’ve shared gongfu tea brewing methods with many tea friends. Although to me, this is simply the stuff of everyday tea sessions, when I discovered how many people have misconceptions or a lack of understanding around gongfu tea, I was compelled to stay on after many of the gongfu tea sessions I attended to answer people’s questions on the spot, offering what humble knowledge I could contribute. I shall present some of these questions and answers here, split into sections, by way of

some extra explanation. For some of the quotations, I have simply summarized the main points or selected the most relevant passages. In the interest of saving precious space, I won’t go into any unnecessary detail here.

What is the correct way to write “gongfu tea” in Chinese?

There are two similar but distinct words in Chinese that are both pronounced *gongfu*: “工夫” and “功夫.” Both encompass the concepts of time, labor, effort and skill. Many people have already explained the difference between these two words in some detail, but I shall nonetheless add a bit of further explanation here. My own impression of the word “功夫” comes from the field of martial arts (it is the word for the Chinese martial art usually called “kung fu” in English). My impression of “工夫,” on the other hand, comes from the *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms*: “Gongfu is a Chan (Zen) Buddhist term which means ‘Chan meditation.’” Mr. Lü Xinwu said that “the phrase ‘tranquil and even-tempered’ is not something that can be achieved without self-restraint; the *gongfu* lies in ‘fixing the flame.’” Mr. Chen Rongmen also said that “the *gongfu* of ‘fixing the flame’ is nothing more than controlling the desires; once this is accomplished, one’s temper will naturally become tranquil.”

During the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing Dynasties (1644–1911), Neo-Confucianist rationalist scholars used *gongfu* (工夫) as a philosophical category. Zhu Xi, the founder of Neo-Confucianism, talked about “the *gongfu* of self-restraint” and “the *gongfu* of studying the reason of things.” In *Answering a Friend’s Question*, Wang Yangming says, “the phrase ‘knowing and doing’ uses two words to express a single *gongfu*; this *gongfu* involves both those words, so there is no harm in expressing it in a thorough way.” So, we can see that the category of *gongfu* (工夫) is a summary of the philosophy of real-world behaviors; a manifestation of the accumulated virtues of Neo-Confucian rationalist scholars, connoting the *gongfu* of cultivating one’s own nature.

I read an article the other day by a tea friend from Fujian who is of the opinion that only people in Chaozhou write gongfu tea using the characters “工夫茶,” while those in Fujian use “功夫茶.” In my opinion, this isn’t totally correct. It can only be said that after Chaozhou’s tea culture circles had successfully been running gongfu tea businesses for some time and garnered some attention, the people of Fujian tried to play catch-up by adopting the phrase. Prior to that, it was common to see both characters used, if not a predominance of the latter. This is confusing, since the former is the traditional way of writing “gongfu.”



Leaving aside the fact that in non-Chinese speaking tea circles overseas, many people have no idea about this distinction and pronounce the word “kung fu tea” like the martial art, the pronunciation of “工夫” and “功夫” in modern Mandarin is exactly the same. However, in Taiwanese, Hokkien and the Chaozhou dialect, the two characters actually have completely different pronunciations as well as meanings: “工” is pronounced *gang* (rhymes with “sung”) while “功” is pronounced “gong” (like the bell). In my opinion, the phrase *gongfu pao cha fa* (功夫泡茶法), “the kung fu tea brewing method,” can perhaps be used to describe the art and techniques of brewing, but it lacks the profound philosophical significance of “工夫茶,” and hence is an insufficient substitute for the term. So, I have composed a sort of “equation” to help people understand and correctly use the term. It goes:

Gongfu tea (工夫茶) = time x (technique + skill + mastery + care for detail + delicacy + repeated training) x self-cultivation

So gongfu not only means training, but also self-cultivation. Without the spiritual element, gongfu isn’t complete.

To draw a parallel, the character “工” also appears in the name of a traditional Chinese painting technique, a meticulous realist method called “*gongbi hua* (工筆劃).” Just as we would not accept reducing the name of this delicate, careful technique that emphasizes the intricate portrayal of small details by writing it as “功筆劃,” we likewise cannot take the term gongfu tea (工夫茶), with its profound philosophical significance, and simply replace it with the phrase “kung fu tea brewing (功夫泡茶).” So, before I begin discussing gongfu tea, I shall invest some *gongfu* myself, explaining the characters “工夫.” After all, gongfu tea is not simply a technique, much less a type of performance! Gongfu tea is not just the practiced skill of brewing the tea; you also need to be able to do the following, using the tea as a medium:

1. Awaken the goodness in your heart;
2. Be in a constant state of calm awareness, with no need for reminders;
3. Achieve a feeling of freedom, while making sure to take care of everyone present;
4. Be kind and considerate of others in all that you do;
5. Observe and seize the right moment for collaboration!

Does “gongfu tea” refer simply to a brewing method?

At first, the term “gongfu tea” referred specifically to Wuyi Cliff Tea, then later to the method used to brew Wuyi Cliff Tea, and later still referred more generally to the method of rinsing, brewing and drinking oolong tea. Below, I will guide everyone through these three broad periods of history to get to know gongfu tea better.

Era One: “Gongfu tea” Refers Specifically to Wuyi Cliff Teas

Shi Chaoquan, who became a monk on Mount Wuyi in the 30th year of the Emperor Kangxi’s reign (1661–1722), provided us with a lot of important descriptions of the Cliff Tea of that era in his *Song of Wuyi Tea*. In his book *On Tea*, Wang Caotang posits the opinion that a line from this poem which so aptly describes gongfu tea—“a care-free heart, nimble hands and delicate *gongfu*”—is the first textual record of the word *gongfu* being used in connection with Wuyi tea. So when people in later generations started calling Wuyi tea “gongfu tea,” the phrase originated from the *Song of Wuyi Tea*.



心技巧

喚醒你內心的良善

The earliest use of “gongfu tea” to denote Wuyi tea appears in *Record of Things Seen and Heard*, parts of which are quoted in Lu Tingcan’s Qing Dynasty *Sequel to the Tea Sutra*. In *Collected Works from Idle Moments* from the Qing Qianlong era (1735–1796), author Liu Jing uses the term in much the same way as it appears in *Record of Things Seen and Heard*. Official Liang Zhangju from the Qing Qianlong and Jiaqing (1796–1820) eras opined that “the Wuyi roasting technique is truly the finest under the Heavens.” This was because the Wuyi Cliff Tea manufacturing method was elaborate and meticulous; the *gongfu* that went into making it was plain to be seen. In his *Record of Returning to the Fields: Tasting Tea*, Liang mentions a Daoist priest named Jing Can from the Tianyou Monastery on Mount Wuyi, who classified Cliff Tea into four grades and also pointed out that people from Quanzhou and Xiamen referred to Wuyi Mingzhong (“Famous Variety”) tea as “gongfu tea”; in other words, it referred to top-quality Wuyi Cliff Tea. In the Qing Dynasty, Guo Baicang wrote in *Records of Fujian’s Produce: Tea* that “every county in Fujian produces tea, with Wuyi producing the most... The people of Quanzhou, Zhangzhou and Taiwan call it ‘gongfu tea.’” This

is consistent with the information offered by the priest Jing Can.

Aside from these records, “gongfu tea” has also been mentioned in texts by scholar Xu Ke from the early Republic of China era (early 20th century) and modern textual scholar Mr. Hu Pu’an. But perhaps because Wuyi tea was not often encountered in Northern China at that time, and also because its tea liquor was an orangey-yellow color, quite different from the green tea that was commonplace there, Xu Ke erroneously called it “red tea” in his text titled *What Can Be Said*. However, no matter whether it was thought of as green tea or red tea, it was all Wuyi Cliff Tea, which was called “gongfu tea” at that time. As for the “gongfu red tea” that was more commonly seen later on, there were a myriad of different varieties, including traditional Fujianese red gongfu teas (Tanyang gongfu, Bailin gongfu, Zhenghe gongfu), Yunnanese gongfu red (a type of dian hong), Qimen gongfu and Yue (“Southern”) red gongfu. Regarding whether these bore any relation to what we are discussing here is a topic for another day.

In his *Conversations on Tea*, Mr. Lian Heng mentioned that “the people of the ‘three zhous’ (Chaozhou, Quanzhou and Zhangzhou) are all fond of Wuyi tea; they will not drink tea from

any other region.” The sixth poem in his *Jianhua Studio Poetry Anthology* goes like this:

*New tea is pale of hue
and old tea is deep;
Green tea is fresh of taste
and red tea is rich.
The Wuyi variety is uncommonly fine,
Covering Manting Peak
in spring and autumn time.*

So, we can see from this how deep a connection Taiwan had to Wuyi Cliff Tea. This fondness for Wuyi tea over all others naturally influenced the gongfu tea preferences of Taiwan’s early tea drinkers, contributing to the perception that “nothing else is worthy of guests.”

Era Two: “Gongfu tea” Also Refers to the Wuyi Cliff Tea Brewing Method

A text from 1762, the 27th reign year of the Qianlong Emperor, *Records of Longxi County: Local Customs* by Fujian native Xiu Mu can be considered the earliest textual record of the phrase “gongfu tea” being used to refer to the Wuyi Cliff Tea brewing method beyond referring to the craft and production of Cliff Tea itself.

The text makes it clear that the carefully selected teaware and the brewing and drinking method were already widespread at that time; it's just a pity that no well-known scholars wrote anything about it that could have become a specialized book and spread knowledge of it further afield. The earliest scholar to record the Wuyi Cliff Tea brewing and drinking method was Yong'an county magistrate Peng Guangdou, in the 28th year of the Qianlong era (1763). Magistrate Peng went to Fujian and served as an official there for three years without so much as tasting Wuyi Cliff Tea. When he finally did taste it, he was delighted, and then ashamed that it took him so long to understand its quality. In 1766, he wrote *Miscellaneous Notes on Fujian*, in which he recorded the gongfu brewing and drinking method associated with Cliff Tea, as well as the characteristics of the tea itself. The rumor that gongfu tea originated in Nanjing may well have arisen due to the fact that he was born in Liyang, near modern-day Nanjing.

The most well-known record of Cliff Tea and its characteristics and brewing method appears in Yuan Mei's *A List of Foods From the Fields: Tea and Liquor*. This great scholar was very well-versed in all things food and drink, but he was used to drinking teas from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, so when he first tried Wuyi Cliff Tea it didn't agree with him. It wasn't until he visited Mount Wuyi for the first time in 1786 that he properly discovered Wuyi Cliff Tea's enchanting floral aroma, mellow, lasting flavor and patience for multiple steepings. Although the term "gongfu tea" does not yet appear in *A List of Foods From the Fields*, this book has provided me with an important reference and sense of direction in my gongfu tea practice.

The use of the term "gongfu tea" to describe the Wuyi Cliff Tea brewing and drinking method really started with author Yu Jiao in the Qing Jiaqing era. In *Writings from the Workshop of Dreams: Romantic Scenes from Chaozhou and Jiaying*, he used "gongfu tea" to describe a method of

tea drinking that had strong connections to Chaozhou. Completed in the fourth month of 1801, the 6th year of the Jiaqing era, the book records that the teaware used for gongfu tea was fine and carefully selected; in those regions only Wuyi tea was favored, and its brewing method required quite a lot of *gongfu*, so that's why the Wuyi Cliff Tea brewing technique was called "gongfu tea." However, a whole new tea-brewing method doesn't spring up and take shape overnight, so although *Writings from the Workshop of Dreams* provides a thorough record, it would not do to conclude on this basis alone that Chaozhou gongfu tea had its origins during that era; further exploration is warranted. According to the research of a tea friend from Chaozhou, there is a poem by Chaozhou imperial graduate Chen Wangyou called "Boat Tea" that was written as early as 1681 (the 20th year of the Kangxi era), which makes reference to the fact that people in Chaozhou were very skilled at evaluating the flavor of tea, as well as their general fondness for Wuyi tea.



If this is indeed true, then this was a good hundred years earlier than *Writings from the Workshop of Dreams*. During the Qing Xianfeng era, Ji Quan wrote *A Historian's Records of the Butterfly Steps*, which contains a passage on gongfu tea. This passage mentions the use of Wuyi tea, and adds an additional brewing step on top of the process described by Yu Jiao, namely rinsing the teapot.

In *Conversations on Tea*, Lian Heng wrote that “the tea must be Wuyi; the pot must be Meng Chen; the cups must be Ruo Shen. These three are quite necessary for drinking tea; anything less would not be worthy of personal pride, let alone serving tea to guests.” He underlines the fact that gongfu tea was also highly esteemed in Taiwan, the necessity of Wuyi tea and the “time and effort (*gongfu*) spent to brew the tea.” Any other type of tea would not be fit to serve one's guests. Since gongfu Wuyi Cliff Tea requires fine, delicate teaware and places a lot of emphasis on technique and the art of tea tasting, over time the brewing

and drinking method naturally became known as “gongfu tea” after its namesake tea.

The *Comprehensive Unofficial History of the Qing Dynasty: Tales from the Qing* says in “Gongfu Tea Section Two” that gongfu tea became more and more refined and particular as time went on. It's worth noting that up until this point, records of gongfu tea, no matter what region they came from, made no mention of any tea variety other than Wuyi Cliff Tea—not even Tieguanyin or Fenghuang Dancong.

Era Three: “Gongfu tea” Broadens to Refer to All Oolong Brewing Methods

Oolong tea originated from Mount Wuyi and is mainly distributed throughout Fujian, Guangdong and Taiwan. Among the seven broad categories of Chinese tea, it occupies its own category, *qing* tea (青茶)—essentially synonymous with oolong. In Shi Chaoquan's *Song of Anxi Tea*, he wrote that “the creek tea method imitates

the Cliff Tea method”; in other words, Anxi Tieguanyin was made using the same process as Wuyi Cliff Tea. Thanks to its wonderful fragrance and unique style, Wuyi Cliff Tea became extremely popular, and tea producers in many regions sought to imitate it.

In the seventh year of the Qing Xianfeng era (1850–1861), a writer named Tang Yan penned a book titled *Tales from Under the Heavens*, in which the eighth chapter was titled *Brewing Tea* and described the whole oolong tea brewing process in great detail. (Tang Yan lived from 1857–1920 and came from a family of Manchurian officials from the “Plain Red Banner” territory, near modern-day Ulaanbaatar in Inner Mongolia. He came from the Gūwalgiya Hala clan, and his original name was Zhen Jun, 震鈞.) Author Weng Huidong, who was born in 1885 (the 11th year of the Guangxu era) wrote the *Chaozhou Tea Sutra: Gongfu Tea*, in which he discusses the fine teaware and highly skilled brewing method of gongfu tea, as well as the use of oolong tea produced in Wuyi and Anxi.





Later in the Guangxu era in 1899, Zhang Xintai's *Guangdong Travelogue* was published. In it, the author describes the craze for gongfu tea at that time, and says that the term "gongfu tea" had already broadened from referring specifically to the Wuyi Cliff Tea method, and now referred more generally to oolong tea brewing and drinking methods. He recounts that gongfu tea had already become fashionable throughout Fujian, Guangdong and Taiwan, and describes the equipment used to enjoy the full appeal of the gongfu tea tasting experience: a red clay stove; a long-handled clay kettle—formally called a *yu shu wei* (玉書煨), literally "jade book kettle"; a small Meng Chen teapot; and little Ruo Shen cups.

Why is olive-pit charcoal used exclusively for fuel to boil the water?

The ancients believed that water was the foundation for brewing tea, and tending the flames to heat it was an important supporting factor. A lively flame was necessary for boiling the water, which required charcoal made from hardwood fired in a kiln until it was black and glossy. The best quality charcoal emitted no smoky odor and made a crisp sound when tapped. The finest of all was charcoal made from the pits of the Chinese black olive, made by removing the flesh of the olives and then firing the pits in a kiln until they stopped producing smoke. This type of charcoal releases a faint aroma into the room as soon as it is lit and burns evenly and steadily with dancing blue flames. When used to heat water, it produces a delicate fragrance, resulting in a soft, smooth tea liquor with a rich and mellow flavor. It is valuable and hard to find, though in Taiwan it has often been substituted with dragon eye (*longyen*, 龍眼) wood charcoal broken into fragments, which also gives quite a good result. Although tea brewed with charcoal-heated water tastes better, controlling the flame to produce concentrated heat and prevent ash from flying around requires more care and effort—more *gongfu*—from the brewer. "One must fan gently and swiftly; when a faint sound is

heard, fan a little harder; this is known as 'civil and military' fanning" (in other words, gentle versus vigorous). Stoking the stove with olive pit charcoal, placing a sidehandled clay kettle atop it, gently fanning the fire with a small fan; only this sort of careful moderation will succeed in producing a lovely, smooth, mellow tea liquor. In early records mentioning fans, whether it be the paper fan mentioned in Yu Jiao's *Writings from the Workshop of Dreams* or the statement in the *Longxi County Annals* that "the fan must move rapidly like the water of Guan creek," there was as yet no sign of the feather fans that became common later on in Chaozhou.

Is the number of cups always limited to three?

Many tea friends take this quote by Yu Jiao in *Writings from the Workshop of Dreams* as evidence that the number of cups used in gongfu tea is not limited to three: "For gongfu tea... there is one cup per guest." I absolutely agree. It's simply the case that the ancients invented many different ways to drink tea; in the Ming Dynasty *Record of Tea*, Zhang Yuan wrote that "When drinking tea, it is preferable to have only a few guests. With too many people the gathering will become raucous, which diminishes the serene atmosphere. Sipping tea alone is a peaceful experience; tea for two is delightful; three or four will make for an enjoyable gathering; with five or six, the experience becomes more superficial; with seven or eight, the gathering will be as clamorous as a public tea stand." Chen Jiru expresses a similar sentiment in *Secluded Happenings on the Clifftop*: "One person drinking tea in solitude can feel the spirit of the tea; two people drinking together can experience its delight; three people drinking together can savor its true taste; as for six or seven people drinking tea together, we may as well call that serving tea to the masses." In these passages, three or four people is seen as the best number for drinking tea, while a group of seven, eight or more will become crowded and noisy, spoiling the atmosphere and the tranquil charm of the tea session. So in terms of the number of tea drink-

ers, there are some obvious requirements if one wishes to avoid the sort of scene that Xu Cizhu describes in the "Guests" section of his *Commentary on Tea*: "With so many guests crowded together, you may as well serve them out of wine cups; with the tea being passed around the masses, you will have to make do with toasting each other with an everyday, ordinary tea." Such a tea session devolves into simply handing out tea to quench the thirst. So that's why gongfu tea sessions normally have a limit of four or five people. Throughout the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the literati maintained this idea that gongfu tea sessions should not include too many people and also implemented a concept of sequence; this is the essence of gongfu tea. If you're wondering why the three-cup method is so prevalent in Chaozhou gongfu tea, the number three has a special significance in Chinese culture and thought. There's an ancient saying that goes, "three is many; three people make a crowd." This is a play on words that also refers quite literally to the Chinese character "人" (*ren*, "person")—put three of these characters together and they form "衆" (*zhong*), meaning "crowd." China also has three major schools of philosophy and spirituality: Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, and each places significance on the number three.

*Drinking tea cleanses
all mundane cares;*

No need to fret over easing your fears.

*Tea leaves you lighter
than clouds in the sky;*

No more fear of sleepless nights!

Buddhism has the Triple Gem of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and Buddhist philosophy emphasizes the Threefold Training: training in higher virtue, higher mind and higher wisdom. In addition to this, Zen Buddhism also places value on the Three Virtues of Tea: "One, it allows a person to stay awake in meditation all through the night; two, it aids the digestion after a meal; and three, it helps with self-control, calming the mind and spirit." So Zen tea is an important aspect of Buddhist teachings. The three essential values of Confucianism originated from the *Doctrine of the Mean*, one of the classic Four Books.

When scholars drank tea, it served as a reminder of these: “Wisdom, humanity and courage; these are the three great virtues under the heavens.” When drinking tea, we also ought to remind ourselves that “one should reflect on oneself three times a day.” Daoism features the Three Pure Ones; students of the Dao take this quote from the *Dao De Jing* as the basis for their “Doctrine of the Trinity”: “The Dao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things.” Chapter 25 of the *Laozi* (another name for the same text) also explains that the trinity of Heaven, Earth and Human are all inextricably connected with Nature; given that tea is a living shoot of Nature itself, how can we as tea drinkers forget about Nature? There’s another saying that wanderers and travelers far from home would use, which goes, “speech should come in threes, and the hands should form a circle.” “The hands should form a circle” refers to bowing with your hands in front as a sign of courtesy, while “speech should come in threes” denotes a polite and modest bearing. Chajin should be respectful toward others and must be modest and discerning people. So the gongfu tea method involves placing three cups close together to form the character “品 (*pin*)” facing towards oneself. This character means “taste”—not only as a verb, but also in the sense of having good taste and character. This embodies a sense of cultured cultivation and serves as a reminder of the moral character that we should aspire to. I believe these are the reasons behind the three cups used in Chaozhou gongfu tea drinking.

Should we preserve the traditional steps of “rinsing/pre-warming” and turning the cups?

In the context of the modern tea serving process, I tend to agree with the “improved version” that most people have adopted to the phases of washing, warming and turning the cups; namely, to simply keep the cups warm in order to boost the fragrance of the tea. But to those who practice gongfu tea, these steps have another purpose on top of just keeping the

cups warm: the acts of rinsing and turning the cups are a sort of test of someone’s skill at brewing gongfu tea; if all that we have left without this is an array of expensive teaware, then where, pray tell, is the *gongfu*? Taking modern notions of hygiene into consideration, we can complete the whole process of warming and turning the cups just once, before warming the teapot and steeping the first brew of tea. For later steepings, when we gather up the cups once the guests have already drunk from them, we can just stick to warming the cups and skip the action of turning them. This way there are no worries about cross-contamination between different people’s cups. However, students of gongfu tea should engage in some self-reflection and ask themselves: out of fear of scalding ourselves, can we really use this so-called “improved version” of the process to quietly obscure the fact that our practical skill—our *gongfu* (功夫)—is not developed enough, let alone our level of accomplishment in the much more profound and nuanced *gongfu* (工夫). Can we really abandon our practice of warming and turning the cups so lightly? And what of the many methods that forgo warming altogether?

In order to put the human spirit of gongfu tea into practice, to convey thoughts that are intangible, invisible and impossible to fully express with words, we need to find a channel for our energy; this is why gongfu tea involves so much preparation and so many complicated actions.

The human spirit often manifests as a caring nature or a spirit of companionship. Gongfu tea is not just about brewing techniques, nor about having the finest, rarest or most costly tea or teaware; rather, these things provide the basic foundation on which to add our care and attention, creating “human gongfu tea.” The tea mountain conservation which I’ve poured all my efforts into promoting is another way of expressing this spirit of human caring; the organic tea growers who dedicate every day to making the switch to ecologically sound methods are expressing the spirit of human caring; the “tea mountain sponsors” who refuse to put profits first and don’t have output volume as their only goal are expressing the spirit of human caring. Without this spirit of human caring, gongfu

tea would not be worthy of bearing the word “*gongfu* (工夫)” in its name.

As the Japanese Zen monk, known in Chinese as Xian Ya (Immortal Cliff, 仙崖禪師) once said, “The key to the tea ceremony lies in the heart, not the method; in the method, not the heart. Without heart nor method, all would be of one flavor. This is the wonderful truth of tea.” In order to truly live this human spirit of tea, we must employ the warm tea in our cups to gently nurture a warm heart, to open our eyes to the beauty in the world and to share each wonderful moment of life with those around us. To share and pass on this spirit—intangible, invisible, impossible to fully express in words—we need a medium to channel our energy, just as tea liquor needs a teacup; without it, the tea could do nothing but flow away into a ditch or evaporate into the air; we’d be left simply cleaning up tea stains for nothing! The heart knows the Way, and the pot is the vessel. If you understand the Dao, you can apply it to the vessel; if you understand Tea, it can show your heart the Way. This is the wonder of tea; you may forget the drinking method and yet be touched by the Tea and the vessel.

Gongfu tea is indeed like the Chinese martial art of kung fu: if we conduct thorough research of historical tea books, ancient texts and the brewing methods that have been passed down in Taiwan, Fujian, Guangdong and Southeast Asia’s Chinese communities, perhaps we can piece together a truly global gongfu tea culture. As Zhang Chao once said, “emotions must be approaching folly before they begin to be real; talent must be accompanied by interest before it begins to approach perfection.” So, whatever we do, we must not think that we have already attained that pinnacle; it would be like clutching onto our tea cup long after we have finished drinking the tea and forgetting to put it down!







The Art of Gongfu Tea



茶人: Luo Yingyin (羅英銀)

Oolong tea is the main variety used as a medium for brewing gongfu tea. As time went by, gongfu tea gradually drifted out from Chaozhou prefecture in Guangdong (Canton) as well as Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in Fujian Province, eventually unfurling its branches and leaves over the ocean as far as Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. As the years pass and the world continues to change, the fragrance of gongfu tea still wafts out from all these places, infused with the local culture.

The earliest record of gongfu tea recognized by academics appears in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) work *Romantic Records of Chaozhou and Jiaying* by Yu Jiao. At the pinnacle of the Qing Dynasty, overseas trade was booming, and places such as Chaoshan in Guangdong and Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in Fujian had easy access to sea ports. Merchants sailed the oceans along with their goods, and many put down roots overseas. These wealthy traders brought items for everyday use along with them on their journeys, and thus gongfu tea implements gradually spread further afield. By the late Qing, China had entered a period of strife and unrest, and many inhabitants were compelled to flee in search of more peaceful lives elsewhere. Thanks once more to the geographical situation, many people from Chaoshan, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou boarded boats and set sail across the ocean, landing

in Taiwan, Hong Kong or Southeast Asia. These emigrants were probably only able to bring minimal luggage with them; for tea lovers, this likely meant bundling a solitary purple-sand clay teapot up with their valuables, accompanied by some of the oolong they were accustomed to drinking.

As gongfu tea continued to change with the times, people across all strata of society in overseas Chinese settlements, from the wealthy gentility to ordinary laborers, had their own classic wisdom surrounding gongfu tea. Even just starting with the tea variety, there were many different choices available: gentleman landowners all drank Wuyi Cliff Tea, while ordinary folk drank Tieguanyin and Shuixian (from outside Wuyi). For entertaining guests and holding tea contests there was Wuyi Jiaming (“Excellent Tea”), while manual laborers drank inexpensive and richly flavored Tihu Wei (“Nirvana Flavor”) tea. Aside from this, the choice of tea vessel also depended on the economic means of the drinker; some people insisted on using teaware by famous craftsmen, such as Meng Chen pots and Ruo Shen cups, while others happily made use of whatever vessel they had on hand to combine the water and tea. So in terms of both tea and vessels, there were many choices of varying quality; naturally, the amount of concern over the particulars of brewing methods also varied along with these choices.

Hong Kong & Tea Houses

Gongfu tea is a way of life, passed along orally and taking root in the heart, interweaving with the local culture and environment to gradually become part of the fabric of life. Hong Kong has historically been a major transport hub, with large volumes of trade passing through its harbors and a fast-paced rhythm of life, its narrow streets crowded with fast-walking pedestrians. In a place like this, how many people really have an idle moment to spare for gongfu tea brewing—to light a charcoal fire, boil the water and grind the tea? Out of this reality arose the classic Hong Kong dim sum restaurants or “tea houses,” where customers could drink tea, eat dim sum, meet friends or talk business, all at the same time. The Chaozhou natives living in Hong Kong were already well-versed in tea, so most people involved in Hong Kong’s tea industry were from that region. So the gongfu tea experts at Hong Kong’s old tea houses really knew their stuff; after all, it was the lifeblood of their business. In the early days, once tea leaf reached Hong Kong, 60% of it was sold on the local market, while 40% was exported to places such as Europe, North America and Southeast Asia.

These days, following a wave of cultural re-awakening, young people in Hong Kong are gradually beginning to learn gongfu through apprenticeships.

The Hong Kong and Taiwan Forum on Contemporary Gongfu Tea was held in late September of last year, championed in large part by well-known local teaware collector Mak Po-tai. At the forum, I facilitated a joint dialogue and demonstration together with respected Hong Kong tea master Yeung Chi-sum, which attracted nearly a hundred young students of tea. This current of young enthusiasts will flow into the roots of gongfu tea; it truly warms the heart to see Hong Kong tea culture being passed down to younger generations.

Southeast Asia

Malaysia, with its sizable overseas Chinese community, is another important center of gongfu tea. Tea drinking was a custom that Chinese immigrants brought with them from their homeland; it could ease homesickness and add flavor to a difficult life. Gongfu tea crossed the ocean to Southeast Asia; in order to adapt to the local environment, it was gradually molded into the Southeast Asian gongfu tea that we know today. Because gongfu tea is brewed using oolong, all the tea had to be shipped in from Fujian and Guangdong. After spending a long time in transit, most of the tea leaf was aged by the time it was drunk. Because of this, the techniques used to brew and serve gongfu tea are largely focused on dealing with the unpleasant odors and sour flavor that can occur with aged tea. Southeast Asian gongfu tea became well known, bringing fame to the local immigrant tea culture.

In the world of Chinese immigrants in Malaysia, gongfu tea became quite symbolic, embodying the memory of their former lives. At the International Tea Expo in Shenzhen last year, I remember that almost nine out of ten exhibitors in the Malaysian zone were serving gongfu tea in the Southeast Asian style. Among these exhibitors was Cai Yafu, three-time champion of the Malaysian Gongfu Tea Competition. He told me that for environmental reasons, charcoal fires are no longer used to boil water for tea in Malaysia. He personally places great importance on the choice of vessels to serve a quality brew, using pot and cup rests from

the Song Dynasty (Chaoshan-style gongfu tea does not use cup rests). He uses a large quantity of tea leaf and spends a relatively long time on swaying the pot, tapping the pot and steeping. When pouring the tea, he holds the pot on a diagonal incline. He also has a large book of wisdom on gongfu tea techniques. When we sipped three cups of a ten-year-old aged Wuyi tea, it truly felt like receiving divine enlightenment; you could feel the energy in your forehead. A taste of this tea really gives you a sense of the strength and determination of Chinese Malaysians against adversity.

Chaozhou

Overseas gongfu tea has its own unique style in each place. Like many tea lovers, a huge gathering of Global Tea Hut members and I made a special pilgrimage to Chaoshan, the birthplace of gongfu tea. An ancient memorial arch near the old Kaiyuan temple is a visible reminder of Chaozhou's thousand-year history. In the lanes and alleyways that crisscross this historic area, every shop has a small corner set aside inside the door or beneath the veranda where you'll find a tea-stained pot stand bearing a *gai'ou* (this is the Chaozhou name for a *gaiwan* or lidded cup) and three small teacups (all identical—a commitment to standards that is seldom seen in today's society). With this setup, you can brew and serve tea at any time—a pot of tea is easy enough for a few good friends to while away some time in pleasant chatter. The warmth of the tea echoes the warmth of Chaozhou's people, the spirit of the whole city infused into a rich and flavorful brew.

Strolling through the old city in the early morning, small birds chirp here and there in the trees; from behind the half-closed doors of the old residences float the faint sounds of Chaozhou opera on the radio. Keeping time with the pace of your footsteps, you hear the rise and fall of the prelude to tea-making; the crisp sound of porcelain teacups clinking together as they're washed, teapots purring and other sounds layering around; all the intimate echoes of daily life in a traditional community.

Of course, the melody of life is always influenced one way or another by society, the economy and politics. Why is it that any mention of gongfu tea seems inextricably linked to the small town of Chaozhou? When did it originate? Why did the trajectory of gongfu tea begin with Chaozhou as its nucleus and go on to radiate outward over such great distances? I have read a number of books on gongfu tea, and these days, with the growing trend for gongfu tea, many more people are publishing books on the topic. However, once you've read one of these books, you'll find that almost all the others are simply quoting the same classical sources.

Fujianese Officials

Gongfu tea is densely intertwined with the lives of the Chaozhou people; its flavor took time to infuse into what it is today. To answer our questions about gongfu tea's origins, we can start by looking at it from a macro perspective, through the lenses of history and geography. According to the historical annals of the Hong Kong–Chaozhou Chamber of Commerce, during the Tang Dynasty (618–907), Chaozhou was sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped, so it became a place where high imperial officials were banished to remote postings as punishment over various infringements or disagreements. The famous writer Han Yu was once exiled to Chaozhou under these circumstances. During his tenure as governor of Chaozhou, Han Yu was universally popular, making particularly significant contributions to literary education. Thanks to his influence, the number of scholars in Chaozhou gradually rose. Hence, if you wander along Memorial Arch Street in modern-day Chaozhou, look up and you will see numerous inscriptions commemorating scholars who achieved various rankings in the imperial examinations. The old town area is full of these memorial arches in all sorts of styles.

By the Qing Dynasty, Chaozhou was already a large, prosperous and bustling city, “a capital without compare in all the surrounding counties or mountain ridges,” “densely populated and crowded with traveling merchants.”



In *Romantic Records of Chaozhou and Jiaying*, author Yu Jiao (1751–?) wrote that “Pleasure boats decorated with tapestries dip their scales in the water; at dusk or dawn, they make for a truly delightful scene, with their beautifully coiffed and perfumed ladies, and the sound of singing rising as clear as jade. The bustling atmosphere is a hundred times livelier than Qinhui. Prior to the mid-Qing Dynasty, immigrants to Chaozhou largely came from the Central Plain via provinces such as Fujian, and most of the officials serving in Chaozhou during that period came from Fujian.” So Chaozhou shared some cultural and economic characteristics with southern Fujian, while also having its own unique qualities. In this, we can find an answer to our question—why was Wuyi tea from northern Fujian the main tea drunk in Chaozhou during the Qing Dynasty? Naturally, it was because of the government officials who brought their culture and customs with them; besides, officials and literati were the only people who had the inclination

toward brewing gongfu tea, with its complex process. This also explains why Chaozhou Prefecture (the modern-day Chaoshan area) was not the only place where gongfu tea had its origins—it also originated in the cities of Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in Fujian Province, for example, though Chaozhou claims its birth as its own.

Looking back on the history of Chaozhou as we have in the above paragraph, we learn that Chaozhou was “a capital without compare in all the surrounding counties or mountain ridges,” “densely populated and crowded with traveling merchants” and “a hundred times livelier than Qinhui.” So where did all this economic prosperity come from? Chaozhou Prefecture was situated on the lower reaches of the Han river that flows through Guangdong. After sanctions on entering and leaving by sea were lifted during the reign of the Qing Emperor Kangxi (1661–1722), Chaozhou replaced Tingzhou, which was further upriver, as the major economic and trade hub of Fujian, Guangdong

and neighboring parts of Jiangxi. Yu Jiao once wrote that “Chaozhou is the Qinhui of southern Guangdong; the scenery along the Han river is every bit as picturesque as that of Yangzhou.” Goods shipped up the Han river from Chaozhou primarily included fish, salt, rice and imported goods; those shipped back down the river were mountain products such as fir timber, bamboo charcoal and bamboo paper. By the Qing Dynasty, Chaozhou salt already had a trade monopoly over an area that included the prefectures of Chaozhou, Jiayingzhou and Xunzhou (now Longchuan) and expanded to cover a total of thirty-five counties, including Tingzhou in Fujian and Qianzhou and Ganzhou in Jiangxi. Merchants from Fujian and Jiangxi gathered in Chaozhou and boats shuttled up and down the Han river; here and there, decorated pleasure boats would mingle with the trade boats, with their “lofty heads, huge bellies and narrow tails.” From 1862, Shantou slowly rose to become *the* trade port in eastern Guangdong, and for Chaozhou as well.

As described above, people relied on boats for transporting goods in the early days, and Chaozhou prospered thanks to its favorable location on the banks of the Han river. Fish, salt, rice, imported goods and timber were all high-value everyday commodities at that time; boats shuttled them up and down the Han river and merchants converged on the city. Its location was not only advantageous in terms of preserving the ancient culture of the Central Plain regions, but also meant that it was well connected for overseas trade thanks to its proximity to the south-eastern coast. The birth of gongfu tea culture is owed to many different elements: to the literary education spearheaded by Han Yu, to the pioneering role of Fujianese officials, to the foundation of flourishing trade. Added to this were the aspirations that scholar officials felt toward life, which allowed them to slowly develop the unique charm and fragrance of gongfu tea.

When did the custom of drinking Cliff Tea with a small pot and three cups begin?

During the reign of the Qing Emperor Qianlong (1735–1796), Yu Jiao, who originally came from Shanyin in Zhejiang Province, suffered some setbacks in his official career and was demoted to a position as a minor official in Chaozhou. While there, he wrote *Romantic Records of Chaozhou and Jiaying*, which would later become an important source for historians tracing the origins of gongfu tea. In it, he described the method of brewing gongfu tea: “gongfu tea is brewed using the method originally described in Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra*, using finer teaware. The stove is shaped like a cylinder about one foot and two or three inches tall, and is made from fine white clay. The best pots are those produced by the kilns in Yixing; they are round with a flattened belly and a curved spout and handle. The larger ones have a capacity of about half a *sheng* (around a liter). The cups and tray are most often flowered porcelain... There is one stove, one pot and one tray, and there is one cup per guest. The cups are small and the tray is as round as the full moon. In addition, there are other implements: a

small clay pot (*wacheng*, 瓦铛), a palm fiber mat, a paper fan, bamboo tongs; all are very simple and elegant. To brew gongfu tea, first pour spring water into the clay pot and heat it over a fire fueled with fine charcoal until it begins to boil. Then, place the Fujianese tea into the teapot, pour in the water, and put on the lid. Then, pour water over the outside of the teapot before pouring out the tea and savoring it carefully. It has a strong fragrance, even fresher and more exquisite than chewing plum blossoms. Distinguishing drinkers, not the sort who gulp down their tea while playing finger-guessing games, will surely recognize its distinctive flavor... Tea from Sichuan has not been in favor for a long time; the only tea valued aboard the trading boats these days is Wuyi. Top-grade Wuyi tea costs a hundred silver ingots and two copper coins. So you can see that aboard the six-sail boats, extravagance abounded when it came to food and drink.”

From the above passage, we can see that Yu Jiao’s tea-brewing sensibilities during the Qianlong era differed slightly from the Chaozhou gongfu tea brewing methods that we know today. One point of difference is that “the larger (pots) have a capacity of about half a *sheng*... there is one cup per guest.” So he used a large pot, and the number of teacups was not limited to three. When tasting the tea, he writes that the flavor was “even fresher and more exquisite than chewing plum blossoms”; this description is a stark contrast to today’s rich, strongly-flavored gongfu tea. When it came to tea varieties, Yu wrote that “tea from Sichuan has not been in favor for a long time; the only tea valued aboard the trading boats these days is Wuyi.” From this we can infer that prior to the time of writing, people in Chaozhou used to drink tea from Sichuan (most likely green tea), so they used large pots that could hold around half a *sheng* of tea (again, one *sheng* was roughly equivalent to a modern liter).

In contrast to this is the account of Qing poet Yuan Mei, written during approximately the same era as Yu Jiao. In *A List of Foods From the Fields* he wrote, “I used to dislike Wuyi tea; I found it so strong and bitter it was like drinking medicine. However, in the autumn of the *bingwu* year (1786), I traveled to Wuyi and visited Manting (Grand

Pavilion) Peak and Tianyou (Heavenly Journey) Temple. The monks all vied to serve me tea. The cups were as small as walnuts and the pot as small as a grapefruit; each pour was less than one *liang* in volume. When sipping the tea, one could not bear to swallow it quickly; I first smelled its aroma then tasted it, slowly moving it around the palate and savoring its flavor. Sure enough, it was delightfully fragrant to the nose and abundantly sweet on the tongue. After the first cup I had a second and a third; it soothed my impatient spirits and put me in a happy and harmonious mood.” In this passage, although the author hasn’t used the term “gongfu tea,” he describes the small pots and cups used on his visit to Mount Wuyi in northern Fujian. Yuan Mei was from Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province where they mainly drank green tea, so he noticed the difference in vessel size and brewing methods used for oolong versus green tea, hence his exclamations of praise for this unfamiliar tea experience.

In Yu Jiao and Yuan Mei’s texts, we also find another interesting point: we can make a fairly confident guess that the small pots of that era originated in Fujian and were later brought to Chaozhou by Fujianese officials for their own use.

For example, in the passage by Yu Jiao quoted earlier, we find this excerpt: “Prior to the mid-Qing Dynasty, immigrants to Chaozhou largely came from the Central Plain via provinces such as Fujian, and most of the officials serving in Chaozhou during that period came from Fujian.” As for the number of cups, at that time a customary number had not been established; yet in Chaozhou today there is an unspoken rule that three cups must accompany the pot. So why is three cups the current standard? The common theories are either that the three cups mimic the character “品” (*pin*, which means “to taste” and is composed of three “mouth” radicals), or that they symbolize the trinity of Heaven, Earth and Human, or Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or other trinities. However, these theories don’t really satisfy anyone searching for a practical explanation. Some have suggested that it’s simply because a pot the size of a grapefruit holds about three cups’ worth of tea liquor.





During the Qing Dynasty, whether we look at Yu Jiao's assertion in *Romantic Records of Chaozhou and Jiaying* that "tea from Sichuan has not been in favor for a long time; the only tea valued aboard the trading boats these days is Wuyi," or Yuan Mei's travel diary from his trip to Mount Wuyi in *A List of Foods From the Fields*, we can find evidence of the changing preferences from green tea to oolong at that time. It constituted a revolution in tea drinking methods and heralded a golden age for oolong, as well as propelling the art of Yixing Zisha (purple-sand clay) pot crafting to new heights. Famous Yixing pot artists such as Chan Mingyuan and Shao Daxiang are representative of this era; also worthy of mention is Chen Hongtao (alias Mansheng), who created the famous eighteen Mansheng pot styles. Though gongfu tea brewing was assembled in Chaozhou, it was made up of several parts, many of which came from Fujian. Chaozhou is therefore the cultural hub where this

way of brewing and approaching tea was steeped. Very soon after, though, it started to be steeped elsewhere and take on other flavors as well.

How much has Chaozhou gongfu tea changed over time?

As time went by and society changed, Chaozhou, the birthplace of gongfu tea, was gradually replaced by Shantou as the major commercial port of the region. After the People's Republic of China was formed, the area underwent a centralization of production and marketing and in the more recent past experienced the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. Although tea drinking is still a part of people's daily lives even today, this great cultural tide is gradually ebbing and changing with the times. These days, fewer people use a teapot, with most opting for a *gaiwan* or lidded cup for brewing. There are various reasons given for this: one

is that some people believe porcelain is better for bringing out the fragrance of Fenghuang Dancong (Phoenix oolong) tea; another is that the use of teapots was abandoned when Anxi Tieguanyin started being produced as a very lightly roasted tea in the '90s; a third is that when economic conditions were not great, people switched to *gaiwans* for their cheapness and convenience compared to teapots. Whatever the reasons for the change, these days in the alleyways of the old city, you almost always see tea being brewed in a *gaiwan* rather than a teapot. It's also rare to see water heated over a blazing charcoal flame these days, with most people using a portable electric stove for convenient brewing. As time marches forward, it seems there's an inevitable trend toward all things quick, cheap and convenient, and it shows no sign of stopping. In this modern life, how can we allow boiling water and a slow flame to carve out a moment of lingering warmth?



In order to stir up interest in traditional culture, the government nominated several Chaoshan gongfu tea culture experts to serve as “intangible cultural heritage representatives.” These conveyors of heritage spent their time tirelessly traveling the country giving classes, publishing books and giving clear and thorough explanations of the ten or more steps involved in a gongfu tea ceremony. That said, gongfu tea is an art that is passed down from mouth to mouth, a wisdom absorbed in the heart; by nature it is part of the fabric of everyday life. In the households of days gone by, it was the eldest son who would hold the pot and serve tea to guests; the eldest grandson would start with the basic task of watching and fanning the charcoal fire, and slowly accumulate a lifetime of gongfu tea wisdom. There is a lot of unsaid depth that cannot be passed on in lectures; it must be absorbed into the heart over a long period of time and practice, guided by experience.

Gongfu Tea in Taiwan

Now, let us take a look at gongfu tea’s journey over time in Taiwan. We can start by reading the poem from the *Jianhua Studio Poetry Anthology* by Taiwanese poet and historian Lian Heng (1878–1936):

*Little Ruo Shen cups
and a Meng Chen pot;
A Ge ware dish laid out
with utmost care.
Time and effort spent to brew the tea;
Each cup more lovely
than Heavenly nectar.*

(The word used in the fifth line of the poem is *gongfu*, which is often literally translated as “time and effort,” so it’s a clear reference to gongfu tea.) In *Conversations on Tea*, Lian Heng also wrote that “The tea-drinking customs of the Taiwanese people are different from those of central China, and instead resemble those of Zhangzhou,

Quanzhou and Chaozhou. Many people from these three places have come to Taiwan, which is why our habits are similar. The tea must be Wuyi; the pot must be Meng Chen (孟臣); the cups must be Ruo Shen (若深). These three are quite necessary for drinking tea; anything less would not be worthy of personal pride, let alone serving tea to guests.” In the passage, Lian Heng mentions that “the tea-drinking customs of the Taiwanese people are different from those of central China”—this makes it clear that Taiwan’s tea-drinking traditions were different from those to the north of the Yellow River basin, since Taiwan’s tea customs largely came from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in Fujian Province, as well as Chaozhou.

So, this explains and contextualizes the influence of migrants from Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Chaozhou on the tea-drinking customs of Taiwan during the late Qing and early Republic era (the early 1900s up until the Communist takeover in 1949).

The “three essentials” of tea drinking took a central place in social interactions among the upper echelons of Taiwanese society. At that time, Taiwan underwent a period of instability and unrest; it wasn't until the 1970s that Taiwan's economy took off, spurring a cultural renaissance and lifting the standard of living. During this period, the whole of Taiwanese society was progressing and flourishing; artists took to the stage and held performances all over the place, while tea lovers took up their teapots and held tea sessions, dialogues and gongfu competitions. One tea enthusiast deserving of special mention is Xu Buliao, who is absolutely crazy about tea. A respected Taiwanese tea master from the previous generation, Zhou Guoqin, took him on as a student and imparted a lot of teachings to him; even today, Zhou Guoqin's influence extends to the famous founder of the Chun Shui Tang tea house (credited with the invention of bubble tea), Liu Han-chieh.

The Pitcher Breaks the Rhythm of Gongfu Tea

The 1970s were a period of growth for Taiwan's tea scene. Tea houses sprung up like bamboo shoots after the spring rains, teachers held “Lu Yu tea art” classes and Taiwan's tea industry shifted away from export toward domestic sales and tea competitions. The tea production and tea art industries developed alongside one another, diversifying the available tea varieties for gongfu tea. As mentioned earlier in this article, most of the people who migrated to Taiwan from Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Chaozhou came to work the land and most likely only brought a solitary Zisha purple-sand clay teapot with them, bundled up with their valuables. So when it came to brewing tea, people simply had to make do with what they had on hand: they would boil their water in a big iron kettle and use a large bowl as a teabowl.

The tea art education of that era planted the seeds for today's tea teachers, and the old-style tea houses that sprang up gave rise to a new trend for tea-drinking. Tea house owners formed the Chinese Tea Promotion Alliance,

giving rise to tea art events, tea-brewing competitions, and later tea gatherings and studies of *chaxi* aesthetics. These all drove the development and spread of different types of tea vessel; for example, the use of “aroma-smelling cups (*wen xiang bei*, 闻香杯)” and the dry-brewing method changed the depth of the teabowl (even replacing it with a “tea pillow” in some cases), and the appearance of the tea pitcher (*cha zhong*, 茶盅) totally changed the gongfu tea ceremony as a whole.

With the advent of the tea pitcher, influenced by Western and Japanese tea instruments, several phases of the gongfu tea serving process disappeared, including the steps termed “Lord Guan patrolling the city walls” (placing the cups close together and pouring the tea into them all with a circular motion) and “Han Xin mustering the troops” (pouring the last, strongest drops of tea into each cup one at a time). Instead, the tea liquor was all poured into the tea pitcher to “equalize” it. Some people were of the opinion that this innovation changed the tea liquor, that the teacups weren't as hot to the touch and the curling steam was no longer visible. It's true that the former rhythm of the gongfu tea ceremony had been interrupted, replaced by a different method of distributing the tea liquor. This also ended the restriction on the number of cups; it was no longer a requirement for everyone to gather around the tea table to drink tea. This allowed for more variations on the *chaxi* or tea setting, paving the way for new and diverse types of tea gatherings.

Mainland China

Taiwan's economic development really brought Taiwanese gongfu tea into full bloom. Taiwan enjoys a unique topography and a multitude of tea varieties, from green tea to red tea to oolong; the teas produced here range from very lightly to very heavily oxidized. Add to this the multiplication of roasting techniques, and Taiwan's diverse tea production industry became the perfect vector for the growth of tea art. While the economy over the strait in the mainland still remained closed to the outside world, Taiwan's small land area and dense population led to

an economic boom and also providing an excellent foundation for the art of tea to flourish. Gongfu tea became a sort of secret knowledge, slowly nourishing a myriad of brewing techniques for various teas.

Today, with the rise of the Mainland Chinese economy, Taiwan's diverse and well-developed tea art scene is perfectly placed to cater to this era of growth. Like waves breaking on dry land, all this culture has been rapidly absorbed and integrated into China. Taiwanese tea art has its own unique charm as well as a sense of aesthetic that appeals to our times. All sorts of tea varieties can be united under the umbrella of gongfu tea; no longer is it limited to the Chaozhou gongfu tea brewing method that was centered around oolong. This has contributed to the growth of Taiwanese gongfu tea and its gradual spread from province to province. So, if we're talking about Chaozhou gongfu tea specifically, Taiwan is naturally a foreign land, but if we're talking about gongfu tea across Chinese communities throughout the world, Taiwan truly is a lively, diverse tea art capital, well-adapted to modern times.



✿ Taiwan truly is a blend of many styles of tea, combining teaware from Japan and China with domestic wares and bridging the methodology and even tea philosophy (“tsiosophy”) of Asia. You can see this mix and blend across lineages throughout the island in almost any shop you visit.





Chaozhou Gongfu Tea

茶人: Chen Zai Lin (陳再隣)



In recent years, in this age of economic progress and flourishing culture, tea culture has been on the rise. Gongfu tea, particularly Chaozhou gongfu tea, as a synthesis of Chinese tea culture and a “living fossil” of the Chinese tea ceremony, has also garnered more and more attention. Chinese gongfu tea has spread throughout the world wherever Chinese people have settled; in each place, it has its own unique set of customs, cultural background and brewing methods. But if we trace all these variations back, they all originate from the same source: Chaozhou gongfu tea. Even the development of the Japanese sencha tea ceremony was heavily influenced by Chaozhou gongfu tea.

In the *Chaozhou Tea Sutra*, Weng Huidong writes, “the people of Chaozhou value sophistication in their customs and loftiness in their conduct. No matter the venue—from grand banquets to places of idle leisure and remote dwellings, factories and shops, right down to roadside stalls and rustic shelters—everyone takes a moment amid their bustling lives (or perhaps their carefree leisure) to gather around a clay stove and a sidehandle clay kettle, to raise their cups and teapot and drink to their hearts’ content. Thus they spend their lives in great happiness.” It’s clear from this that the people of Chaozhou were truly enamored with tea. At that time, there was

a commonly recognized list of seven daily commodities, namely, “firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and tea.” The people of Chaozhou, however, re-ordered the list to “tea, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and firewood,” putting tea in first place as the most important element of daily life. The people of Chaozhou referred to tea leaves as “tea rice (*cha mi*, 茶米),” signifying that to them, tea held a status in everyday life equal to rice, the main staple food of the region.

Deliberate Self-Cultivation

The earliest written record of the term “gongfu tea (*gongfu cha*, 工夫茶)” appears in a book from the Gan-jia era of the Qing Dynasty, *Writings from the Workshop of Dreams: Romantic Scenes from Chaozhou and Jiaying* by Yu Jiao: “Gongfu tea is brewed using the method originally described in Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra*, using finer teaware.” In *A Historian’s Records of the Butterfly Steps* from the Qing Xianfeng era, author Ji Quan wrote, “Gongfu tea is most abundant in Fujian Province. The tea is grown on the mountains of Wuyi.” In this passage, the author alludes to gongfu tea varieties as well as the art of gongfu tea. We can tell from this that the earliest tea variety used for

gongfu tea was Wuyi Cliff Tea, which gave rise to the saying, “the tea must be Wuyi, the pot must be Meng Chen, and the cups must be Ruohan.” The Chaozhou Dancong tea variety appeared toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, and the people of Chaozhou largely switched to drinking Chaozhou Dancong instead of Wuyi.

In Chinese, “*gongfu cha*” is sometimes written using a different *gong* character, “功夫茶” instead of the correct version, “工夫茶.” “*Gongfu* (工夫)” generally has four possible interpretations: work or labor, self-cultivation or personal accomplishment, mastery in a certain skill and idle or free time. These two *gongfu* words (工夫 and 功夫) are distinct from each other; in fact, in the local Chaozhou dialect, they are even pronounced differently: “工” is *gang* while “功” is *gong*. Rationalist Neo-Confucianist scholars in the Song (960–279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties used “工夫” as a philosophical category; Zhu Xi, the founder of Neo-Confucianism, used terms such as “the *gongfu* of studying the reason of things” and “the *gongfu* of self-restraint.” Another Neo-Confucian philosopher, Wang Yangming, says in *Answering a Friend’s Question*, “the phrase ‘knowing and doing’ uses two words to express a single *gongfu*; this *gongfu* involves both those words, so there is no harm in expressing it in a thorough way.”

Huang Wan writes in *Ming Dao Essays: Volume One* that “thorough understanding reveals *gongfu* (工夫), studying the underlying principles reveals efficacy (*gongxiao*, 功效).” From this, we can see that the uses of 工 and 功 are notably different.

The category of *gongfu* (工夫) is a summary of the philosophy of real-world behaviors, a manifestation of the accumulated virtues of Neo-Confucian rationalist scholars, connoting the *gongfu* of cultivating one’s own nature. This sort of *gongfu* (工夫) cannot be used interchangeably with the other word *gongfu* (功夫—an ostensibly similar word meaning work, skill or the martial art *gongfu*/kung fu). The distinguishing features of Chaozhou *gongfu* tea lie not in the essential nature of the tea itself, but in the selection of quality teaware, a carefree spirit while brewing and consummate mastery of not only brewing techniques, but of the brewer him- or herself.

Brewing with a Teapot

Chaozhou *gongfu* tea is known for its exquisite teaware, as embodied by the well-known saying, “the pot must be Meng Chen.” Hui Meng Chen (惠孟臣) was a celebrated master craftsman of Yixing purple-sand clay (Zisha) teapots from the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1911). He was famous for his skill in making small teapots, which in later generations simply became known as “Meng Chen pots.” In Chaozhou, these pots were also commonly known as “infusing pots (*chong guan*, 沖罐)” or “Jiangsu pots (*su guan*, 蘇罐),” so called because Yixing, where they were made, is in Jiangsu Province. In the early days, as well as Meng Chen pots, there were other famous makers of Zisha pots such as Tie Huaxuan (鐵畫軒), Qiu Pu (秋圃), E Pu (萼圃), Xiao Shan (小山) and Yuan Xisheng (袁熙生). Weng Huidong’s *Chaozhou Tea Sutra* contains the following passage: “The pot should be small rather than large, shallow rather than deep... The depth of the pot affects the aroma; shallow pots brew a good flavor and preserve the fragrance, without liquor being left over in the pot.” This touches on the criteria for choosing a pot as well as the

effect it has on the resulting brew. Purple-sand clay pots are thin, light and agile, with a glossy luster and flowing, curved lines; when used for *gongfu* tea brewing, they produced a good flavor and fragrance, hence their widespread popularity in southern China.

Toward the end of the Qing Dynasty, Chaozhou’s own teapot manufacturing industry began to flourish, and the residents of Chaozhou shifted their favor from Yixing Zisha purple-sand clay pots to local hand-spun Chaozhou red clay pots. Chaozhou pots are glossy and fine, particularly well-suited for brewing the fragrant Chaozhou Dancong teas. During the late Qing, several influential teapot crafting families began to emerge, such as the Zhang clan with their Lao An Shun brand (老安順) and the Wu clan with their Yuan Xing brand (源興號), whose spun Chaozhou pots earned fame and widespread popularity.

In more recent times, people have begun to use lidded *gaiwans* instead of teapots. *Gaiwans* are shaped like an upside-down bell, which makes it easy to put the tea leaf in and pour out the dregs afterwards. But the *gaiwan* is really just a stopgap solution for tea brewing, a temporary replacement to be used when no teapot is available. Because of their wide mouths, *gaiwans* do not retain the tea’s fragrance like a teapot, and they don’t allow for the usual act of pouring water on the lid to retain heat—and *gongfu* tea varieties, from Guangdong’s Dancong oolong to Fujian’s oolong Cliff Tea or Taiwan’s Baozhong and Dong Ding oolongs, all need suitably high temperatures to bring out their aroma. As the saying goes, “boiling water brings out the tea’s fragrance”; only when the water is hot enough can it bring out the fragrances in the tea leaf—which are activated at varying temperatures—and produce a tasty brew.

Small, Thin Cups Bring out the Aroma

Chaozhou tea drinkers are fussy about their cups, hence the saying, “the cups must be Ruo Shen (若深).” Generally speaking, the cups will not have a very large capacity; they’re just the right size to pour out three cupfuls

from one teapot. Many people aspired to use cups of the Ruo Shen brand, which became widely popular for their small size and thin sides, which bring out the fragrance of the tea. The people of Chaozhou nicknamed these cups “white jade magistrates” or “egg-shell cups,” as they were paper-thin and whiter than snow, bringing out the tea’s aroma and making it easy to observe the color of the liquor. They held just the right amount of liquor and could tolerate many brews, so they were well suited to Dancong tea, which can usually take somewhere between ten to twenty steepings.

When the people of Chaozhou brewed tea, no matter how many drinkers were gathered together, they only used three cups. Those three cups were passed around the group in order of seniority, with the eldest drinking first; as well as embodying the *gongfu* tea etiquette of respecting one’s elders, this practice also expressed a spirit of oneness and harmonious unity: “I am part of you, and you are part of me.” The person serving the tea must drink last to show respect for the guests. According to traditional custom, the person with the highest status in the household should be the one to serve the tea; this was also intended as a sign of respect for the visitors. Because of this, it was generally older people who used to brew the tea in Chaozhou; however, these days, people don’t tend to worry about sticking to this particular aspect of tradition. Three small tea-cups clustered together look like three mouths, symbolizing the Chinese character *pin* (品), which means “to taste” and is composed of three “mouth” characters (*kou*, 口). A group of three makes for the most stable structure; this idea is expressed in philosophical sayings from the *I Ching* such as “the various things (*pin*, 品) appear in their developed forms” and “he takes game for its threefold use in his hunting,” and from the *Dao De Jing*: “The Dao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things.”

Water & Teaware Are Key

The choice of water is critical for tea brewing, and a lively flame is critical for preparing the water.



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The discerning tea brewer among the scholarly classes opted for a small red or white clay stove paired with charcoal made from Chinese black olive wood, accompanied by a sidehandle kettle made from thick clay (called a “*shadiao*, 砂铫”). Spring water that has flowed over coarse sand and pebbles, over mountains with decaying bamboo leaves, has an active quality to it; the clay stove is small and delicate, with a narrow stove chamber that is good for concentrating the flame. Water boiled over a charcoal flame on a clay stove is like rice cooked over a wood-fired stove: it has its own distinctive flavor. Olive-wood charcoal is highly combustible and burns for a long time, producing lively flames with little ash and no smoky smell. It produces blue flames and a gentle aroma of olive pits, a pleasantly cheerful smell. The *shadiao* kettle was commonly known as a “little thin pot (*bao guo zi*, 薄鍋仔).” Water from sandy springs is fresh and pure, so the *diao* must be made of san-

dy clay; using a metal pot, particularly an iron one, to boil the water for tea can result in a metallic tang that is no good for brewing tea. There’s a saying that goes, “an eight-out-of-ten tea plus ten-out-of-ten water will make for ten-out-of-ten tea liquor, but a ten-out-of-ten tea plus eight-out-of-ten water will only produce eight-out-of-ten tea liquor.” So the selection of water and teaware is very important in brewing a good cup of tea.

In the Tang Dynasty (618–907), author Su Yi wrote the following in *Sixteen Types of Water for Tea Brewing*: “The water vessel must not be made of metal, just as a zither must not be made of Paulownia wood and ink cannot be made from gum...The tenth type of water is ‘tongue-tying water.’ For generations, people in the countryside have smelted water vessels, with plenty of metals to choose from: copper, iron, lead or tin. Such pots are only suitable for cooking. Water boiled in them may have a tangy, bitter and astringent taste.

When drinking it, over time this unpleasant flavor will entangle itself in the mouth and cannot be dispelled.” The author says that kettles made from metals such as copper and iron have an unpleasant “tangy, bitter and astringent taste,” yet is full of praise for water boiled in gold or silver vessels, calling it “noble water.” A related record appears in the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty: Historical Biography One—Empress Xiao Hui Zhang*: “On his birthday, the Empress Dowager sent him a gift of a gold and silver teapot, accompanied by a letter paying her respects.” This record of the Empress Xiao Hui Zhang giving a gold and silver teapot as a birthday present to the Emperor Kangxi corroborates Su Yi’s opinion of gold and silver vessels. However, the people of Chaozhou only used clay *shadiao* to boil their water; even those from wealthy households didn’t use gold or silver pots. One reason for this is that *shadiao* were produced locally and therefore easily obtained;



another is that when boiling water in these clay pots, you can better hear the whispering sound of “wind in the pines” as the water bubbles away, forming its “crab eyes and shrimp whiskers”; this is a delight unto itself.

Using Paper Scoops

When putting the tea leaf into the pot, a square white sheet of paper about the size of one’s palm is used in place of a tea scoop. It’s simple and frugal, embodying the spirit of “truth lies in simplicity” and “add only what is necessary.” It also makes it easy to observe the color and shape of the tea leaves. If we look into the origins of using a paper “tea scoop,” we find that it arose out of a gesture of courtesy towards guests. When guests came to call and the host thought that their everyday tea wasn’t good enough, they would send a family member to a tea shop to buy a bag of superior tea to serve to their guests.

The square tea-scoop paper started out as the paper wrapping for a single serving of tea, enough for one brew; the host would simply unwrap the paper and use it to pour the tea into the pot. The paper had another function, too: life wasn’t easy back then, and tea was expensive, so before putting the leaf in the pot, people would arrange the tea leaves so that the broken, powdery bits were at the bottom or on the inside, and the longer, intact leaves surrounded them on the outside. This formed a layered ball of leaf inside the pot called a “*cha dan* (茶胆)” or “tea gall.” In this way, the leaf was used to the fullest and nothing was wasted. This method of pouring in the tea leaf was relatively common with gongfu tea in overseas Chinese communities; sometimes, people would even purposely break intact tea leaves into smaller bits to make the “tea gall.”

However, this “tea gall” technique of arranging leaves in the pot is not very common in Chaozhou today.

(Some say it originated in Shao An.) The reason this method arose in the past was due to low incomes and high tea prices, so in the name of frugality even the tea dust was included in brewing. Before brewing, the tea dust was placed in the center and surrounded with the more intact leaves. The water was not poured directly into the center of the teapot, but rather was poured in over a certain spot on the lip of the pot. This method was aimed at preventing the fragmented tea leaf from escaping; if the *cha dan* broke open, then the tea would end up overly bitter and astringent. In the Chaozhou gongfu brewing method, there was no tea pitcher or “fairness cup (*gong bei*, 公杯)”; instead, the tea was poured directly from the pot into the cups using the method known as “Lord Guan patrolling the city walls and Han Xin mustering the troops.” So, another purpose of forming a *cha dan* was to avoid tea leaf fragments ending up in the cups. This requires skill, “gongfu.”

These days, standards of living are higher and tea is produced in greater volumes, so we no longer use the tea dust for brewing. Not only do tea drinkers not brew it; tea makers actually sift out the tea dust and leaf fragments that are produced during the manufacturing process and discard them or use them to make tea-bags. From a market perspective, when looking at very uniform, intact tea leaves, the higher the grade, the higher the price they will fetch. The degree of “wholeness” is used as a criterion when evaluating tea leaf; this refers to the proportion of leaves that are fully intact versus fragmented. More intact and uniformly shaped leaf is considered superior, while more fragmented leaf is inferior. So, these days, the sheet of paper employed in the brewing process is simply used as a tea scoop; it has lost its earlier function of shaping the *cha dan*.

Conclusion

“Lord Guan patrolling the city walls” and “Han Xin mustering the troops (role call)” are two steps in the Chaozhou gongfu tea brewing process that have been handed down over the generations. Lord Guan and Han Xin were both military generals—so wouldn’t referencing them in the context of an elegant tea-drinking setting spoil the atmosphere somewhat? Actually, this is a misconception: the people of Chaozhou worshiped Lord Guan as a symbol of benevolence and righteousness. So people involved this well-loved figure in a tea session to signify making sure that the tea was poured out evenly as the teapot made its rounds; that each of the three cups of tea were equally strong; that the tea was distributed fairly, with no favoritism, discrimination or sense of division. The following step, “Han Xin mustering the troops” comes from a well-known two-part saying: “Han Xin musters the troops; the more the better.” Only the first part of the saying is used, whereas the key meaning is in the second part, which is left unsaid—a subtle piece of humor.

Tea drinking is intimately woven into the lives of the people of Chaozhou, and the time-honored art

of Chaozhou gongfu tea is rooted in the everyday lives of Chaozhou folk. Its exquisite teaware and careful brewing techniques and drinking methods not only embody rich cultural and historical meaning, they are also a reflection of the social customs of Chaozhou. Today, thanks to the Chinese diaspora, gongfu tea has evolved into many different tea brewing methods in many different places. Nevertheless, the spirit of welcoming guests with a good cup of tea is has lived on in the hearts of people of Chinese heritage all over the world, passed along with each wisp of fragrant steam.



茶 *Temperature is everything in gongfu tea. Without the proper heat, it is very challenging to bring out all the aroma, fragrance and Qi of a tea, especially oolongs, puerh, black and gongfu red teas. Heat plays a role from beginning to end. If the temperature stays consistent throughout the session, teas will also be much more “patient (nai pao, 耐泡),” which means we get more steepings. The flow will also be smoother and more even from cup to cup, making for a more comfortable integration of the tea into our system. For this reason, so many of the experiments we recommend conducting to understand and improve one’s gongfu brewing revolve around various aspects of increasing and preserving temperature.*





Voices from the Hut

For this month, we have a special article by our editor of Voices from the Hut. He has recently allowed poetry into his tea practice and offers some insights into the ways poetry and tea overlap, as well as how one can enjoy poetry alongside tea. He also made all the beautiful photography to accompany the article.

If you would like to contribute some writing to Voices from the Hut 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!

THE SONGS OF MOUNTAINS & LEAVES

茶人: Matthew Grohne

In August 2019, Wu De released his sixth book, *Fallen Leaves*, which is a collection of tea-inspired poetry. It was shortly thereafter that I had the privilege of sharing tea for the second time with Bill Porter (Red Pine), to whom I had been introduced by a tea friend a couple of months earlier. Knowing Wu De's deep admiration for Red Pine and gratitude for his contributions in making Buddhist scriptures (and Chinese poetry) accessible to the English-speaking world, I contacted Wu De prior to the visit to see whether there was anything he would like me to pass along, as well as whether he had any advice for me, as I would be serving tea. He requested that I shepherd a copy of *Fallen Leaves* into Bill's hands and had it shipped at once, along with one for me.

This article is not the story of that encounter; rather, that seems to be the point at which a new practice began to make its way into my life. Upon receiving the books, I began reading my copy of *Fallen Leaves* during my morning tea—after my first three bowls, I would read a poem between each sub-

sequent bowl. I found the rhythm of this practice to not only be enjoyable, with verse enhancing tea and tea enhancing verse, but to deepen my subsequent meditation—and it greatly decreased the temptation to reach for my phone before my session had ended. Reading at this slow pace, it took weeks to make my way through the small book, and after reading its final poem, I found myself looking for the next book to pick up.

In a way, the choice had made itself, as Bill had gifted me two books of poetry by the Yuan Dynasty hermit-monk Stonehouse (石屋) during my visits: *The Mountain Poems of Stonehouse* and *Stonehouse's Poems for Zen Monks*, both of which he himself had translated. I began with the former, which I had previously read several years earlier. However, at some point during this readthrough, I made a change to my process: instead of reading silently to myself, I began reciting the poems aloud. This relatively small change, I found, made all the difference in the world and greatly deepened the experience.

To the Ear

Poetry occupies an interesting space in the realm of communication. Whereas other forms of art, like music and painting, communicate at a primarily non-verbal, non-conceptual level, poetry utilizes language to point to that which lies beyond language. Rather than simply focusing on the content of the words, poetry adds musicality to its expression and in the process appeals to something deeper and more fundamental in how we make sense of the world. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said, “The work of art does not convey something else, just itself,” though I suppose it could be said that a work of poetry lends itself to both conveying something within and outside itself. While the content of the words themselves are referential and often point to something outside the poem, the musicality of the poem evokes a more intuitive kind of understanding within the listener (and the speaker, for that matter) through its rhythm, rhyme and meter.





I speak of a listener here because I have come to believe that something significant is lost when a poem is not given voice. The words of a poem written on a page seem an incomplete expression, like sheet music or uninfused tea leaves. While there may be an inherent beauty to the structure, as well as an ability to use one's imagination and inner voice to get some sense of the meaning (thus listening to oneself), the full impact can only be realized when invoked through recitation or song. It is a return to more ancient ways of knowing. Poetry throughout the ages, including that of Stonehouse's time, was not just spoken but put to music, often to the tune of traditional folk songs.

Contrary to certain modern sensibilities that elevate the conceptual and empirical over the holistic and intuitive, poetry communicates something of the suchness of things rather than simply a representation of them. In fact, despite the tendency to regard many forms of art, from music to poetry to painting, as superfluous adornments to the serious endeavors of modern life, music likely predates language and grammar as a way of sharing

information about the world and does so with a greater fullness and depth than any number of words could. This fundamentality can be seen in the way that non-human animals communicate, from the chorus of birds to the songs of whales. It can also be seen in the way parents speak to their infants—cooing and engaging in “baby talk,” increasing the musicality of their words so as to communicate even before the content and grammar can be understood. Within biology there is a maxim “ontology recapitulates phylogeny,” which expresses the understanding that the development of individual organisms tends to mirror the evolution of the species. If this is true, then music almost certainly came before, and is more deeply rooted than, words and grammar.

Zen practitioners throughout the ages have understood this need for a non-verbal way of communicating the nature of one's mind—that anything of profundity cannot truly be communicated in words, at least not completely. Words are merely fingers pointing at the moon, not the moon itself. However, art can get us a little closer, as it goes beyond the verbal, abstract and

conceptual and into something more holistic, intuitive, full and experiential. Perhaps this is one reason that Zen has also cultivated a wide array of arts in order to express the nature of one's mind, from calligraphy and music to flower arranging and tea.

To the Heart

I've written above of poetry's ability to affect the listener—to communicate with words something beyond words—but it also has the ability to transform the one performing the poem. As I assume is the case for many who will see this article, I grew up reading silently to myself most of the time, whether it was for pleasure or for learning. However, as mentioned earlier, I have found the vocal recitation of poetry to be a personally transformative practice—so much so that it has also spilled over into my reading of other texts, especially sutras.

By reading a poem aloud, the reader has an opportunity to seriously play with the perspective of another, embodying to some degree their affect,



state of mind, worldview and consciousness. When enacted with poetry of a more personal nature, this allows one to get an empathic sense of a person from a different place, time and culture—one with different life experiences, desires, faults and insights. One's own perspective on and understanding of the human condition expands in the process of becoming that person for a time. Using one's imagination in this way is not merely an intellectual process, but one that requires a more complete transformation of one's being in the moment—a paradigm shift in how one experiences the world.

However, when enacting scriptures, sutras or spiritual poetry, this transformation can also guide one toward the truths realized by the writer of the verse. This process shares elements with the ancient Christian practice of *lectio divina*, or sacred reading. *Lectio divina* involves the reading of scripture slowly and vocally, repeating especially salient phrases more than once, with an intention of being guided and changed by the text. It requires that one approach the text as a teacher, with the student adopting an orientation of reverence and receptivity, as

well as a willingness to learn and let go of critical evaluation. As taught by the Canadian cognitive psychologist John Vervaeke, practicing *lectio divina* also involves acting out the text, making sense of it not only intellectually but through embodied emotion so that the text can disclose an understanding beyond what one currently knows about oneself and the world. This is an intuitive process, and one that evolves over time. In other words, what would it be like to live in the state of realization described by the text? What would it be like to have the Word of God spoken through one's own voice?

I have found myself gravitating toward these more spiritual themes (as well as naturalistic ones) in the poetry I choose for my own practice, especially when it accompanies tea. Just as there is certain music and certain aesthetic themes that are more harmonious with tea, there are certain themes, lengths and styles of poetry and verse that lend themselves better to being interspersed with cups of tea. In my experience, poems of a moderate length and simplicity of language and theme work best, since they don't stimulate the intellect and are not so long that a

freshly-poured cup will go cold. Then, as I am sipping my tea, I can let the impression of the poem sink in. As each cup of tea guides me toward more clearly seeing myself, each verse adds perspective on what I may find when I do.

I hope that this article has inspired you to enhance both your reading of poetry and of scripture by speaking (or singing) them aloud, and that the practice may be as transformative and inspiring for you as it has been for me. I would like to offer one more invitation as I conclude this writing—send me your poems! I would love not only to incorporate them into my practice, but also to publish them in Global Tea Hut as part of a future *Voices from the Hut* article. I will leave you with a few of my own—may we come to know one another's minds through the sharing of tea and verse!



流 Cup by cup
I come to rest where I am
Verse by verse
I fly off to the mountain
Essence of cliffs and rivers
Whispering wind through the pines
Mist dragons swirl o'er the lake
Rising sun brightens my eyes

流 Sapphire autumn sky,
Wisps of cotton cloud
Golden maple leaves,
Edges rusty brown
Sun-warmed sea of grass,
Morning Dew abounds
Bowl of boiled tea,
Tranquil air to ground

流 While the oak blushes
At the autumn rain
The unmoved cedar
Meets it all the same

流 Waiting for the wind
To start its twirling descent—
Crimson autumn leaf

流 The hard-working squirrel
Takes a break from hiding nuts—
Scolds me from a branch

流 The airplane above
Stifles the woodland chorus
Of jays and thrushes

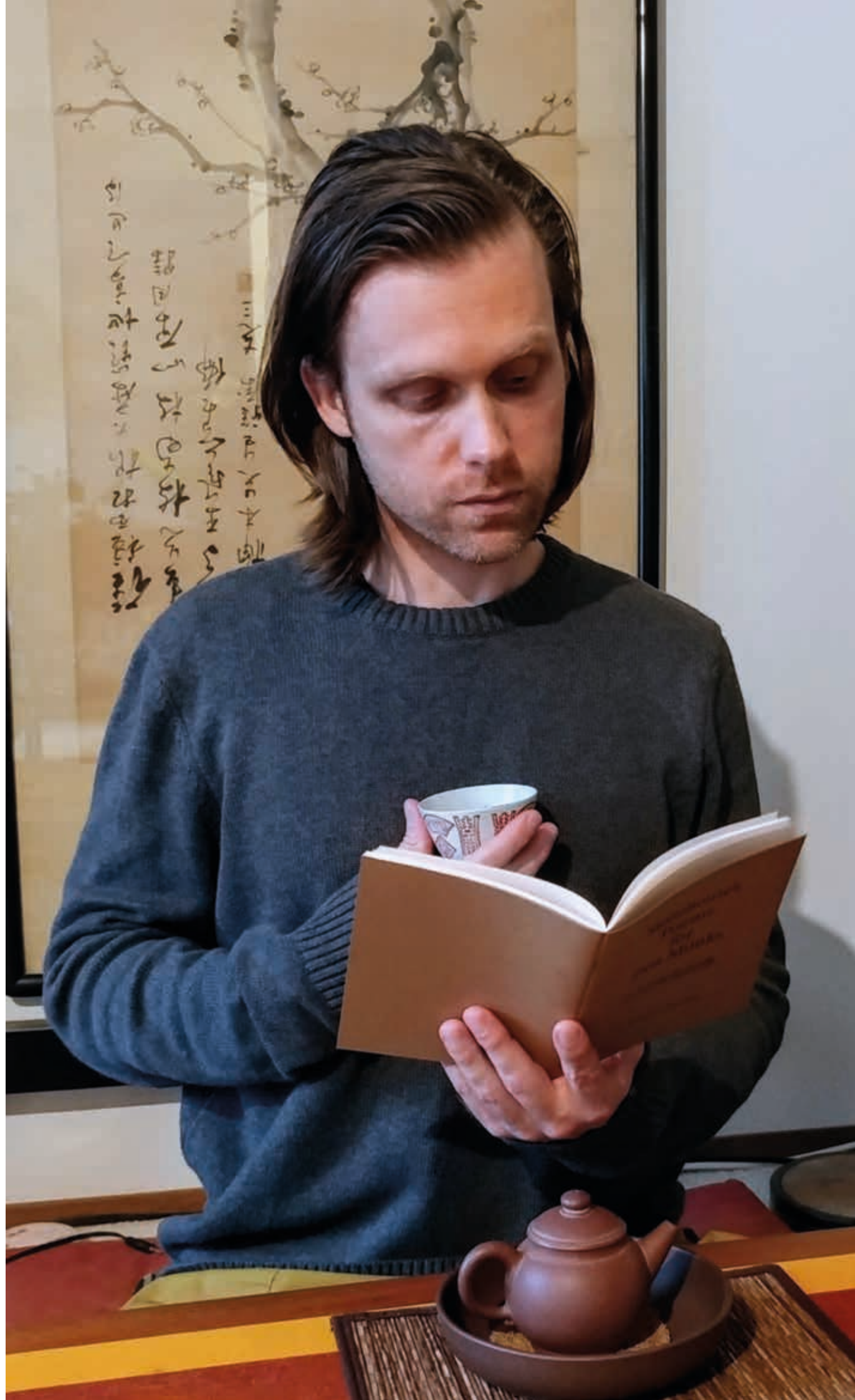
流 Icy winter night—
Moonlight from a cloudless sky
Streams through my window

流 A frog croaks outside—
Awaiting my guest for tea
I light the charcoal

流 I sit atop a moss-covered rock
In company of ancient hemlock
Recite a few lines from old Han Shan
Imagine those mountains long foregone.
Amid elder trees and lofty peaks
I find the serenity I seek
But my thoughts can't help but bring to fore:
"There's no place for hermits anymore."

流 Footsteps down the path
Branches cracking underfoot—
Totally careless!

山與葉曲
茶興詩同心歌唱



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 Lera Zujeva.

It started in childhood: My earliest memory of tea was of my mum drinking her tea and making me black tea with lemon, or with fresh strawberries in summer months. My mum has always been a huge tea lover, and always drank tea, without sugar or milk, just pure leaves, even though you couldn't find great quality tea in the USSR. Drinking tea together in the kitchen with her was our way to connect. Even when I moved to London, she used to send me Chinese green teas from a newly opened local tea shop. So, I continued to drink tea, but again, it was just casual drinking and I didn't think anything of it at that time. How crazy! London has many beautiful tea shops, but I was getting my tea from my mum from Lithuania!

At some point around ten years ago my life was shattered. I was pregnant, single, with no money, no job, no hopes and no future prospects. Those two years were the hardest of my life. I had no idea where to move in life or what to do. I was completely lost. I didn't want to go back to investment management, which I had been doing before all of that—a job that was well-paid but made me depressed. However, I had no idea what I could do instead.

This all changed when I went to see a certain woman and she told me that working with tea would be perfect for me. She told me many interesting things, but when she mentioned tea, it felt as if my heart jumped with joy in my chest. I could not have missed this sign. There was such a strong openness and resonance to her words that I knew I had to follow up on them. Suddenly, there was hope. On returning home, I started reading *everything* I could find on tea: blogs, books, learning from the owner of a tea shop in London, traveling with her to China on a tea trip, then joining a group of crazy Russians for more traveling to tea regions and visiting tea farmers. I was in love!

Coming back to London, I created a historical tea walk around London, combining my love for tea and the city. I also started holding tea tastings and other events. It wasn't an easy journey and I had to overcome a lot of fears around it—fear of failure, of criticism, of being judged, of questions I don't know the answers to, of public speaking—so many I don't think I can list them all here... But it always felt that I was held and supported by Tea Herself. As if Her motherly love was gently pushing me outside of my comfort zone towards those fears, so I could face and become free of them. I really felt that support from Her, and I did so many things that I had never had the courage to do before. And yet, something was missing. The depth that I could feel in Tea was not touched upon through tea tours or tea tastings. I felt that tea is so much more than just culture, hobby or a beverage. I was always into meditation and spirituality, and I sensed that Tea is love, presence, connection and more. There had to be a Way of Tea that connected us to that. So, I Googled "Tea Meditation" and Global Tea Hut popped up in the search results. That was 2014.



🍵👤: Lera Zujeva, Lithuania/U.K.

Needless to say, my life was never the same again. Everything that Global Tea Hut talked about had the same joyful resonance in my heart: Cha Dao, The Way of Tea. I became a member, discovered the late great Nick Dilks on the last resource page of the magazine, reached out to him and went to see him in Birmingham. That first tea ceremony in this tradition impacted me in a way I cannot put into words. We drank tea for five hours. Nick told me stories about Tea Sage Hut and his life in Taiwan. Sitting together with tea in this way, it felt like I was teleported to the magical land of tea and ancient sages and I felt I finally found what I was searching for. There was a strong feeling of homecoming. Like a long exhalation after a difficult day.

This community has changed my relationship with Tea so much. It has become my gateway to the heart, to the soul, to deep connection with everything that life is and to so many friends. There has been a healing, a washing away of those layers of deep wounds and hurt that we all have within. However, it's a process (a long one) made with baby steps, which I am still making. (Or maybe I am just a slow person!) But, most importantly, through Global Tea Hut I found my tea family that I love so much! My gratitude for that is immense!

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

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茶主题: Zen & Tea

茶道

茶主题: Yixing Masters

茶主题: Tea & Food



As we all deal with the changes in the world, many of us are not able to sit in groups and drink tea or travel to China on Global Tea Hut trips, and we are all starved for hugs and community. Last month, our Voices from the Hut section was all about several tea lovers' solutions to this, using virtual sits to fill in for the spaces and times we used to spend sharing tea with one another. We would like to continue to support these efforts in any way we can. Let us know if we can help in any way and stay creative and positive!



We are excited to launch some tea books on our website, including some of the projects that Wu De worked on before Global Tea Hut. We have some great puerh, tetsubin and ginbin books as well!



Amazing teas continue to roll in from friends. We have two very special teas now from Auntie Ai, whom you can read about in past issues: Mountain Spring and Daughter of the Forest.



We plan to host two more courses in the next year, one on the "Seven Genres of Tea" and a special long, deep-dive course into puerh tea. These will be nerdy courses to learn lots of information about the teas we love, hopefully increasing appreciation.



We are offering free tea for anyone who wants to write for the annual Zen & Tea issue in February. We want to continue to invite you to participate in this magazine, beyond just the Voices from the Hut section. If you want to write about Zen lessons you discovered through tea or your musings on Zen in general, please submit an article by the end of the month and we would be honored to send you some great tea in trade. We hope these calls inspire the writers out there to put brush to paper!

Center News



We continue to look at properties. We are moving more towards looking at land these days and then slowly building up Light Meets Life at our own pace and with the architecture and design that we need for our Center right from the start. There are complicated zoning laws here, but we are working around them



We hope you stay excited for Light Meets Life. We want to involve you in the planning of what we hope you feel is *your* Center. The more form Light Meets Life takes, the more real it becomes. Please contact us with ideas about what you envision for the property and for the experience at ten-day courses. Perhaps you have an idea for a type of course you would like to see when we open. Please share your ideas with us. We hope to create a whole new calendar and curriculum for Light Meets Life. And it is *your* Center, after all!



We continue to offer day visits should any of you find yourself in Taiwan. As restrictions lift, Taiwan may be a safe destination for those of you looking to travel this year. Stay safe and sound, with our prayers.

December Affirmation

I am what I do

Do I invest myself in my work with joy and skill? Am I passing time or is my being wrapped up in time? I am what I do and leave a mark of joy and passionate skill.



www.globalteahut.org

The most devoted to skill 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

