

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

April 2017

CLASSICS OF TEA

MING DYNASTY

(1368-1644)

朱權

錢椿年

顧元慶



文蔚亭

閩龍

注釋



HEAVENLY BLOSSOM

Raise a bowl in celebration, for this is our third Classics of Tea issue! This time we are exploring the Ming Dynasty, with translations of four Chajin from the time, as well as some insightful commentary from renowned scholars. And we have a gorgeous and unique tea to sip along the way!

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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Kaelen Ohm, Canada



神聖綻放

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From the Editor

In April, we start moving into farming mode, spending more time next door trying to grow as many vegetables as we can. This month is also time to start breaking out the lighter teas, which means more young sheng for us. Like we said last month, this is an interesting time for tea lovers because this year's new tea hasn't yet arrived. Some of it will be made this month, but we don't usually start receiving it until May. This means that our longing for young sheng tea has to be satisfied by last year's tea (or even older), as the weather grows warmer and sunnier and the days longer in a way suitable for this kind of tea. There is a crackling anticipation for this year's tea while we look on at last year's and wonder about the magical changes that a year's worth of fermentation has brought.

As you read this exciting issue, we will be traveling on our fourth Annual Global Tea Hut trip—this year to Anhui, Yixing and Shanghai. Raise a bowl for us! We promise to keep you all in our thoughts and hearts as we travel. This group definitely represents the bonds of this Global Tea Hut experience, as much more than a magazine and a Tea of the Month—as a community. We will be making tea and writing articles to fill a whole issue, so you will be able to read about our adventures soon. These trips demand a lot of planning and work to organize, but they are always life-changing and epic. We hope that each and every one of you has the opportunity to come on an Annual Global Tea Hut trip at some time in the coming years. In order to expand the possibility of such an experience for all of you, we are discussing the idea of creating an Annual Global Tea Hut gathering each year, separate from the trip. The gathering would take place somewhere in Taiwan, which is much easier for us. We would book a nice, remote mountain resort somewhere on the island and spend a week or so meditating, hiking, drinking tons of tea and growing closer to each other as tea family. What do you think about that?

And while I am asking you about your opinions on Global Tea Hut matters, what do you think of the new logo? What about the print changes? We are very excited to move towards using the simple text/leaf logo on this cover. We held a contest to choose it and a few of you submitted some amazing designs. This simple tea leaf in the "T" design was our favorite, though. The new printers have been to the Center to share some tea. They love our project and what we do. We know them by name and communicate regularly, which makes a huge difference—Global Tea Hut is all about connections like this. Furthermore, they are getting us environmental certification.

This issue is one of the big ones for me personally—I am so excited to plan, work on and eventually publish these issues that I actually start on them many months early, and with great verve and passion. These issues in our Classics of Tea series feel important to me. There is already an ongoing discussion about a hardcover book of all the translations in this series once we finish it in the coming years. It feels like these translations will outlive us, benefiting future Chajin as well. Also, we hope that this translation project will inspire other tea lovers with a command of classical Chinese to create more translations of the same works. (*The lighter titles in the Table of Contents to the right are commentaries, and the darker fonts represent the classics.*) More such translations, along with commentary, footnotes, etc., will result in a better understanding of Tea's rich and vast history and heritage. This is the third installment in our Classics of Tea series, moving forward chronologically: we started with the most important tea work ever, the *Cha Jing* by Lu Yu from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), then last time translated the *Cha Run* by the Emperor Song Huizong of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and this time we have chosen several Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) works on tea, since they are all shorter. We have some wonderful contributions in this issue as well: an article by our local Global Tea Hut Chinese art historian Michelle Huang, who once again used her amazing classical Chinese to tirelessly translate these works for us all, as well as articles by the brilliant tea scholars Steven Owyong and James Norwood Pratt. This is an exciting issue, brimming with tea spirit, ancient to modern!



—Further Readings—

This month, we plan to republish some information on the seven genres of tea, as well as some of the green tea articles from our May 2016 issue, which was devoted completely to green tea from around the world.

**Further Readings are posted on our blog each month.*

TEA OF THE MONTH

Over the course of this issue, we are going to be exploring Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) tea, from powdered tea, like the cakes which were popular in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), to the eventual ban on powdered tea that created a resurgence in steeped tea, which had previously been a local, rather than national, way to enjoy tea. From dynastic China to the present day, most people have enjoyed drinking green tea, but we wanted to create something extra special to commemorate our third issue in this Classics of Tea series, so Wu De and Mr. Xie got busy sending samples back and forth, chatting and tasting, sipping and slurping their way to this amazing Tea of the Month. We're all in for a real treat this month: something elegant and graceful to sip as we read the ancients' tea wisdom.

Many of you ask us why we don't send out more green tea. We'd love to, but the first issue is that green tea is suitable only for certain seasons. It is more astringent and cooling, and therefore better for the late spring and summer time. Also, since green tea is the most popular tea in China, it is often difficult to find organic, sustainable examples of this kind of tea, since more of it is produced via mainstream, so-called "conventional" farming, and on a large scale that is not always conducive to quality. And when we do find organic Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese or Chinese green tea farmers, our experience is that the hard work involved in making organic green teas can make

them more expensive than we can afford for Global Tea Hut, unless the farmer is very generous (and they can't always afford to be, sometimes because there is only a small amount and at other times because they need the revenue that the tea brings them).

Since green tea is one of the most popular teas in the world, with very old traditions spanning China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan, its processing is very complicated, with great differences in production methods from place to place. The ideal, though, is always to create a delicate, fresh, vegetal liquor, often with floral notes and a color that can range from bright green to yellow or white. And don't be fooled by the fact that it is the most-produced and consumed kind of tea in Asia: green tea can be one of the most difficult to make well, and there are incredibly skilled green tea masters producing some of the best tea on earth by hand in small batches. Such hand- and master-made green teas are growing rarer these days, however, replaced by machine-made, mass-produced varieties that are far less interesting. Before discussing this month's unique green tea, let's review green tea, perhaps unpacking some new areas of this tea to refine our understanding.

Large & Small Leaf Trees

We have to start with an understanding of the two main, most generalized categories of tea trees: small-

and large leaf. The original ancestor trees in the birthplace of tea, which is Lincang in Yunnan, were large leaf. Separating the kinds of tea trees by leaf size can be tricky, though, because the size of any given leaf won't tell you whether it is from a small leaf or large leaf tree. Large leaf trees also produce buds, which start out tiny, and small leaf bushes also have leaves that grow up, so any given small leaf tree's leaf maybe bigger than one from a large leaf tree. However, standing back and looking on at the garden from afar, you will understand why Chajin of the past chose to categorize tea trees in this way, because once the leaves are fully grown, large leaf trees have much larger leaves than small leaf trees. Another way to think about this is to say that the large leaf trees are able to produce much larger leaves.

Large leaf trees are more easily distinguished by their trunks, which usually branch about a meter from the ground. Some varieties branch much higher. The trees in Ai Lao, for example, have trunks that stretch several meters into the sky. This has to do with the genetics of the varietal (or species of *Camellia*, since tea is made from several species), as well as the forest environment in which the varietal or species evolved. Large leaf tea trees also have deeper roots that often extend at a downward angle. As tea moved further north from its home "South of the Clouds," it evolved into a bush, branching from the ground, with a wider, shallower root structure.



Heavenly Blossom



Mingjian, Nantou, Taiwan



2016 Green Tea & Blossoms



Taiwanese



~500 Meters





These small leaf bushes would then develop a smaller average leaf size the further north the tree found itself (whether naturally migrating or carried by humans) in response to the colder weather. The further north tea went, the smaller the average leaf size. The leaves of small leaf trees in Japan are so small that they look like needles after they are dried.

Tea is an evergreen, staying bright and green all throughout the year, which is why the climate has such a strong impact on the varietal that will develop in different regions. Incidentally, the weather in any given growing season also impacts the flush of tea leaves much more significantly than it impacts other nearby plants. Tea is sensitive! This is one of the magical qualities of the brew we all know and love: each bowl or cup is filled to the brim with the weather of the mountain ecology from which it came, bringing all that Nature to you in every steaming draught!

While there are some large leaf green teas, mostly produced in Yunnan, and some of them can be quite nice, it is fair to say that the best and most famous green teas are made from small leaf varietals/cultivars. Small leaf tea trees usually flush more often and are less brisk, bold and astringent, with sweeter buds—all of which is more conducive to green tea production. Still, we have to take that statement with some bitter astringency of its own, as there are a lot of different green teas in the world, and just as many varietals and cultivars used to make it. In fact, green tea might just be the vastest genre of tea, with the greatest variety of difference in varietals/cultivars as well as production methods.

Green Tea Processing

Usually, when discussing the production of green tea, we have to start by saying that green tea is processed

with the goal of arresting oxidation completely. As we have discussed in previous issues, oxidation is an enzymatic process: it is basically cellular breakdown due, of course, to exposure to oxygen, like when a banana or apple turns brown on the counter. While that works as a general description of green tea processing, the truth is much more complicated, like most things in tea. To start with, it is actually impossible to prevent oxidation in tea. If bugs bite the tea leaves—and let's hope they do, because otherwise it means our tea was made with pesticides, which are unhealthy for the environment, the farmers and us tea lovers—the tea starts to oxidize, and once the leaves are plucked, they will also oxidize some. Even if the pickers ran at a break-neck speed to rush each and every leaf to the processing facility one by one in an absurd attempt to prevent any and all oxidation, the leaf would *still* oxidize some before it reached the heat that would eventually arrest the oxidation.

What Makes a Genre of Tea Unique

One of the other popular mistakes published in English is that “all tea is *Camellia sinensis* and the differences in genre are all in the processing.” Correcting this misinformation is paramount to an understanding of red tea. Actually, both points of this widely published idea are technically incorrect. Firstly, not all tea is *Camellia sinensis*; there are actually a couple dozen species of *Camellia* used to produce tea. (We have shared some other species throughout the years.) Traditionally, the cluster of species containing caffeine that have been used to make tea were called “Theaceae,” which comes from the Greek “Thea,” after the titan goddess of clear vision. (There are even more species in the *Camellia* genus that have been used to make tea throughout the millennia that humankind has partaken of the Leaf, if you include those without caffeine.) Tea was, in fact, often called “Thea” before it was called “*Camellia*.”

The second half of the mis-statement that “all tea is *Camellia sinensis* and the differences in genre are all in the processing” is to do with processing. It is important to remember that pro-

cessing methods developed over time in response to certain varietals of tea, which in turn evolved in response to a particular terroir. Farmers were learning, honing their skills through some trial and error, as well as a deep connection to a life of tea and intuition. In other words, they innovated over time to bring the best out of the tea trees that were local to them. It would not be correct to say that Long Jing green tea, for example, is just a method of processing tea, because that processing was developed to suit certain varietals of tea. And as green and other tea varietals have changed, moving from place to place (whether naturally or carried by people), and human-made cultivars have been developed, so too have processing skills adapted and changed, creating a whole array of different green teas. So you could say that any traditional green tea is both a processing method and a varietal (or, more correctly, varietals, as there are now many).

Nowadays, there is a lot of experimentation in processing teas from one region using another region’s processing methods. Like most of the modern world, this fusion is due to faster com-

munication, more access to information, easier travel and the greater connection to the rest of the tea world that modern farmers enjoy. And a lot of that is great. People traditionally only ever bought tea from tea shops, but nowadays many people can purchase directly from farms, often resulting in a fairer prices for the farmers themselves. And some of the new experiments do result in amazing teas, like the purple red tea from De Hong many of us know and love (Evening Sky), but the majority of such teas don’t turn out well, like the modern attempts to cultivate Taiwan’s Three Daughters, as well as ching shin oolong in Vietnam and Mainland China. No matter how nice the trees or the skill of the farmer, you can’t find the same quality elsewhere. In other words, a Taiwanese tea processed like a Bi Luo Chun green tea might be a nice tea in its own right, but it will never compare to a real Bi Luo Chun from Jiangsu. And anyone (we do mean anyone) with some experience drinking Bi Luo Chun will know that this tea is not from Jiangsu. (Good cover bands, with skilled musicians, should make their own music!)

茶 Mr. Xie holding some of the tea blossoms that are in our Tea of the Month.

Consequently, saying that green tea is “unoxidized” isn’t really accurate.

Some authors then choose to say that green tea is defined as “un-withered,” since withering is the stage in which most oxidation occurs in tea processing. Withering traditionally meant spreading the leaves out on round bamboo trays suspended from a rack so they had upward air flow from beneath, but nowadays large-scale mass-produced tea is often withered on the ground (or even the road) on large plastic tarps. Saying that green tea is un-withered is a bit more accurate than saying it is unoxidized, but it still doesn’t complete even a basic, general understanding of green tea production. For that, we have to make another distinction of our own: all-bud versus bud-and-leaf green teas.

This distinction is important because all-bud green teas are indeed un-withered, while green teas made from buds and leaves require some withering. Green teas made exclusively

from buds can go straight from harvest to the heat that will arrest oxidation, but if there are leaf sets with the buds, the leaves will have to be withered to reduce their moisture content. Freshly-plucked leaves, full of water, are brittle and would crumble if processed immediately, so they have to be withered to withstand processing. Most often, all-bud green teas are also shaped in the firing, but bud-and-leaf green teas also undergo rolling to break the cells down more and shape the tea.

All Buds vs. Bud & Leaf

The distinction between all-bud and bud-and-leaf green teas also opens the door to some interesting quality discussions with regards to green tea in general. Some people might dismiss bud-and-leaf green teas, thinking that they are later, market-driven innovations introduced to increase quantity, and therefore retreat to the idea that

true green tea is un-withered, but that would be misleading. It is true that in many kinds of green and white tea, a demand for greater quantities of famous teas has resulted in the production of lower grades of the same tea that include leaf sets—so the best grade will still be all-bud, in other words, while some cheaper grades made with leaves, and often from later flushes, are also sold alongside the traditional tea. However, there is a big “but” that we have to place rather emphatically next to this statement. *But* not all bud-and-leaf green tea is produced just to increase quantity and/or profit margin. There are also bud-and-leaf green teas that have always been made that way, because the varietal demands that it be so.

It is important to remember that in tea production, the previous step is always more relevant to the overall quality of the tea than the following step, especially when the tea is made with skill by those experienced in tea.



茶 *Bud-and-leaf green tea needs to be withered, like our Tea of the Month shown here. The withering is necessary to reduce moisture in the larger leaves so that they can be fired and rolled, which will shape them. It is, therefore, not true that green tea is un-withered, nor is it true that all-bud green tea is always better than green tea composed of leaf and bud sets. There are exceptions.*

In mastered tea production, the earlier stages will determine how the later stages are done, if at all, to bring out the best in the tea. Ultimately, this means that the terroir will *always* be the most influential factor in determining the quality of a tea. Like all plants, tea is a product of its environment: it is the sun, the mountain, the fog and mist and the weather, so the better the environment, the better quality the tea. And the terroir will determine the varietal most suitable to grow there, which is always going to be the varietal that evolved naturally to suit that environment. (Farmers in Pinglin can grow nice Tieguanyin varietals, for example, since the environment is slightly better than Muzha, but such tea will always lack the “Muzha character” that makes Muzha Tieguanyin special.) The varietal will then determine the harvest time, which will determine the next stage, and so on. What this means in

the end is that the ideal tea processing is one in which the terroir, varietal and weather/harvest time determine how the tea is best processed to bring out its natural qualities. And sometimes, with some green teas, this means that the tea is actually better as bud-and-leaf sets than it is as all-bud tea.

It is true that all-bud green teas tend to be higher quality, as the buds of most small leaf varietals are sweeter and far less astringent, having less chlorophyll and tannins. Such teas are also more valuable, as they demand hand-picking so that the buds are not damaged, and it usually takes thousands or even tens of thousands of buds to make a single *jin* (600 grams in Taiwan and 500g in China). In general, all-bud teas are much more conducive to better green and white tea production, but there are natural exceptions like our Tea of the Month, which we’ll discuss in a bit. We say “natural” because, once again,

the best teas are always made in harmony with the nature of the leaf. In other words, the best tea is always made in a way that brings out the inherent qualities in the varietal of tea used, which was in turn “chosen” by Nature Herself, which means that it evolved by and through the environment in which it is found.

The famous Anhui green tea *Taiping Houkui* (literally “Peaceful Monkey Chieftain”) is a great example of a green tea that is better as a leaf. In fact, the leaves are left to grow quite large in this unique green tea. Traditionally, *Taiping Houkui* is grown in valleys, which means that the tea trees receive less sunlight and therefore produce much less chlorophyll, which means the larger leaves are still quite sweet and lack the astringency and bitterness of most teas. This unique green tea is also made from a large- or medium-leaf varietal called “*shi da*.” The leaves of this amazing and rare tea are also quite beautiful, especially since they were traditionally produced by hand one leaf at a time (yes, every single leaf). When you find some authentic *Taiping Houkui* (there are oh-so-many fakes), steep a few long leaves in a dark rabbit’s fur bowl and you’ll have found one of the many doorways to the Heavenly realms through tea!



茶 *Taiping Houkui*

After discussing terroir and varietals, as well as understanding oxidation in green tea and the differences between all-bud and bud-and-leaf green teas, we can turn to heat, which is where the greatest differences between the processing of green tea lie, from China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. As we said earlier, all-bud green teas aren't rolled, so the heating process is often how and when the tea is shaped, like pressing down and flattening the famous green tea Long Jing (Dragon Well) as it is pan-fired. In modern times, green tea can be sun-dried, basket-fired, charcoal-fired (with or without a pan), steamed or oven-fired. The differences in the drying process really distinguish each shape and kind of green tea. Ultimately, this topic exceeds the scope of this article, so we will just explore the processing involved in our Tea of the Month, Heavenly Blossom, later on in this article. (We will put some of the articles from our May 2016 issue about green tea up on the Further Readings section of the blog so you can explore these differences more deeply. Alternatively, you can read the entire issue on our website for free!)

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

Like all sexual plants, *Camellia sinensis* undergoes an alternation of generations. In tea trees, the production of what botanists call "sporophytes," which are the spore-producing generation of a plant, having two matching chromosome sets, represents the dominant stage in the life cycle of a tea tree, while the production of what are called "gametophytes," which are the male and female cells is the minor stage. Through cell division (called "meiosis"), the sporophyte creates a gametophyte, which is then fused through cross-pollination with that of another

plant, with the help of either insects, like bees, or pollen spread by the wind. After the gametophytes are fused, a zygote is formed with chromosomes from both the male and female plants. Then, through "mitosis," which is also a kind of cell division, this new plant will grow to maturity. This is how tea is naturally propagated, in scientific terms.

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

Life Cycle of a Tea Tree

Before we turn to our Tea of the Month, Heavenly Blossom, we thought we would discuss the life cycle of a tea tree, especially *Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis* (small leaf tea trees), since our tea has flowers in it. We've never really talked about this before. Most plant books use a lot of botany jargon, which we will try our best to unpack using layman's terms so we can understand the life cycle of our beloved "Thea" a bit more, as well as her rare flowers, which some of you may have never seen.

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

打開心扉



茶 *Camellia* are close cousins to tea. Tea is a cluster of species in the *Camellia* family, traditionally called "Theaceae."

The variety in Nature is magic, just as in humans. Every tree is different. Sure, they share some similarities due to common genetic heritage and similar *terroir* (climate, soil, etc.), but like people, they each have their own medicine, their own perspective, experience and wisdom.

The difference in power and healing between seed-propagated and cloned tea is obvious. As we discussed earlier, there are essentially two main varieties of tea trees: large and small leaf. Large leaf tea trees can live thousands of years. The oldest one we've dated is 3,500 years old! (The trunk is about seven people around.) There are probably older ones out there, or at least there were in the past. Small leaf tea trees can live hundreds of years, and some are many centuries old. But here's the punch line: the clones on plantations typically live only thirty to fifty years. And more than a few farmers have told me that they aren't living as long anymore, sometimes as few as fifteen to twenty years.

Our attempts to interfere with Nature rarely take into account all the biodiversity and infinite, immeasurable connections between species. We take control of an environment and monocrop it, controlling a few factors in a huge web of symbiosis. As we've done this to larger and more diverse areas, our meddling has begun to have a global impact, changing the Environment (with a capital 'E') rather than just the places where we farm.

Nowadays, most tea is made from cuttings, and because it is so heavily pruned, it will never pass through its natural cycle and flower, which is why many tea lovers have visited tea farms in the past without ever seeing any tea flowers there—many plantations don't blossom, in other words. The "natural" growth of new leaf shoots occurs in successions, called "flushes," that are almost always altered by the harvesting and pruning of humans. However, the relationship between tea and human beings (as a natural animal species) is ancient, and need not be seen as "unnatural," especially when the trees are honored as living beings, rather than as commoditized "property," and grown sustainably with the health, happiness and quality of the tree as viable concerns. Human beings need to learn that

the quality of life of our food, plant or animal, very much *is* the essence of its nutritional quality for us!

No matter the varietal/cultivar, all healthy shoots on a tea tree will form leafy growth in spring. Terminal buds then become dormant as the season progresses. Certain areas and varietals also have growing seasons in the summer, autumn and sometimes even winter as well. Dormant terminal buds will shed bud scales in some varietals, leaving scars on the stems that may represent leafless flushes, which often occur at the same time as the flush of new buds. The flowers are formed in the autumn, usually from October to November. Flowers appear in the space between the leaf and stem where the terminal bud starts growth for the next highest flush. The gorgeous flowers of a tea tree form with a large mass of yellow stamens, often blossoming two or three together on short branchlets. The white or pale pink blossoms of Camellia tea trees appear on drooping stalks, usually between two and four centimeters in diameter. They form from five to nine petals, which are round, concave and often fall off quite quickly. The petals are surrounded by five sepals arranged in a tile-like pattern described by botanists as "imbricate." These casings are smooth and round. It then takes from a few months to a year for the tree to be cross-pollinated and bear fruit. The fruits (seeds) of the tea tree are smooth with flattened, round capsules that are usually split into five chambers, each with one solitary seed. It is not uncommon for two seeds to form fused together.

Before the two-legged animal came to share in the protection and propagation of the genetic heritage of tea, ensuring that Her genes would spread all across this great Earth, She required the help of mice and owls to propagate Herself, as have many trees before Her. Mice gather the protein-rich tea seeds into caches, sometimes far away from the mother tree, and then owls eat some of the mice, who never return to their cache that is then free to sprout. And it is a good thing there are many seeds in the cache, because tea seeds don't sprout with much consistency. (We have planted many at the Center, and talked often about them with Mr. Xie. Our experience is that as little as

one-quarter sprout.) In this way, the tea trees can actually migrate hundreds of kilometers over long periods of time, though much further carried by humanity's love for the Leaf.



茶 The delicate flowers are an essential part of the life cycle of a tea tree, but you rarely see them on plantations, as the trees are harvested or pruned too often. The cloning of tea trees, adding chemicals to their growth cycles and over-harvesting result in an unnatural and unhealthy plant, which, of course, cannot bring healing to us.



Heavenly Blossom

Heavenly Blossom is the second tea Wu De and Mr. Xie made together. It took around six months to create. First, the trees had to be left un-pruned so that they would flower in the autumn of 2016 and Mr. Xie could collect and sun-dry the tea blossoms. Then, after trying some samples, Wu De and Mr. Xie decided to use the more delicate, later winter flush of leaves from *tsui yu* (kingfisher jade) trees to make the blend we call “Heavenly Blossom.”

Carefully picking the autumn blossoms by hand is quite difficult, as they fall apart easily and have to be caught right when they open. They are then dried in the sun. Since Wu De and Mr. Xie knew there would not be many of them, they suspected that spring green tea would overpower the very subtle and soft flavors of the blossoms. Sure enough, all the spring flushes of each varietal rendered the flowers tasteless and odorless. Mingjian is low-altitude and therefore receives much more sun, resulting in earlier, harder spring harvests, as well as more flushes overall throughout the year (up to six). This means the tea develops an astringency and bitterness relatively quickly, and even the first flush of tea will be rather harsh if processed into green tea, lacking the delicacy that Wu De imagined for blending with autumn tea flowers.

The tea was picked, withered, pan-fired, rolled into balls because of its delicacy (even though Wu would rather have had striped tea, it can only be made from spring flushes), and then oven-dried. As we discussed earlier, this type of green tea is an example of one that is much better with some leaves mixed in with the buds, lending the tea more depth, fragrance and breadth. There are other all-bud green teas from other regions that would also have gone well with these tea flowers, and Wu De looked into that possibility as well, but it was difficult to find an organic and/or affordable example. In the end, he wanted to keep the whole tea process with our beloved Mr. Xie, so opted for this bud-and-leaf ball-shaped green tea.

Heavenly Blossom is a soft, crisp and fragrant winter green tea with a very slight astringency when brewed properly. The energy of the flowers is profound. If you are sensitive, you will notice the uplifting force they bring to what would otherwise be a very simple green tea. If you can remember the May 2016 Tea of the Month, which was a simple, spring green tea from Mingjian, you will be able to contrast it with the presence of these flowers in the tea. The Qi is much more airy, rising under the arms and carrying you like a soft breeze away from your session.

Drink this tea in the very early morning (dawn) or mid-afternoon, surrounded by some nice sunshine and natural scenery, and you'll feel the breezy Qi of the sweet tea flowers blowing through your soul. Perhaps this tea helps to capture the elegance and grace of dynastic tea, which we are going to turn to now in the coming pages. It was easy for us to raise our bowls and with each sip see the clothes of our guests slowly shift into flowy, embroidered Ming robes, and watch as their hair pinned itself up in topknots, as they flicked their long, silken sleeves off their wrists and picked up their bowls, commenting with nostalgic charm about how the whole of Nature twirled around and through the blossoms floating there...



Leaves in a Bowl

Sidehandle brewing

Water: spring water, gathered or bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: cooler, crab-eye, roughly 70° C

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

Steeping: long or short, to taste*

*especially if you're brewing leaves in a bowl

Patience: five to ten steepings

茶 Green tea like this month's is better brewed at a lower temperature.

Bring the water to a boil and then let it cool back down.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a wooden spoon over a stone mortar. The mortar contains tea leaves, and steam is rising from it. The background is dark, making the hand and the objects stand out.

Brewing Tips

While you certainly can brew this glorious tea in a side-handle pot, you will miss out on watching the glory of the floating, opening tea blossoms, which is why we would emphatically suggest brewing this tea leaves in a bowl. The traditional Chinese character used for appreciating tea, “pin (品),” is literally three mouths, which represent the three main senses we use to appreciate tea: our taste, smell and sight. Most often, flavor and aroma are going to play a larger role than the visual appreciation of dry or wet leaves, but with Heavenly Blossom we could present a convincing argument that watching this tea open will bring you as much joy (or more) than tasting/smelling the leaves and liquor.

Heavenly Blossom is a green tea, which means we have a nice opportunity to talk about water temperature with regards to lighter teas: lightly-oxidized oolong, green, white or yellow tea.

The common information copied and pasted from website to website and company to company is that such light teas need lower-temperature water, with desirable temperatures often listed as anywhere from sixty degrees Celsius to the high eighties. Since such information is rarely based on experience (or experimentation) and more often just repeated, it is also often misleading. First of all, fine and well-made green tea from nice, clean environments can always handle higher temperature water, or even gongfu brewing. What results is not necessarily inferior, but simply different. The tea can also be more patient as a result of such brewing. The lower the quality of tea, coming from less natural environs and more human-made cultivars propagated from cuttings, the more rough any kind of tea will be when prepared with hotter water, which will draw out more of the tea's essence.

That said, many light teas do offer more fragrance and demonstrate their delicacy more clearly when they are steeped in cooler water. Since Heavenly Blossom has tea flowers in it, it will also be better with slightly cooler water. We have found that it is still always better to bring the water up to at least “crab eye” bubbles and then let it cool down, as opposed to stopping the water earlier, though you can go to “fish eye” also and then let it cool down. The best way to let it cool is to just wait patiently, meditating for a few moments as the water reaches the desired temperature. (If you absolutely must be scientific about it, shoot for 70° C, but please try to abstain from using a thermometer.) This lower temperature will allow the green tea to remain soft so that the blossoms will shine through.

Also, whether leaves in a bowl or sidehandle brewing, you will have to be more skillful this month in choosing the right amount of leaves to add, for the same reason a lower temperature is needed: to preserve the delicacy of the tea so the blossoms shine through. Use roughly two to three grams if you are brewing leaves in a bowl and have ordinary-sized tea or rice bowls. (It is hard to give a specific amount without knowing the size of your bowls or teapot.) This will give the leaves and blossoms more space to dance, and ensure that the liquor reaches the softness and delicacy that will bring out its best qualities, lightening your body so the wind can pick you up...

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TEA SUTRAS of the

明朝茶經 MING DYNASTY

The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) was a time of great change for Cha-jin. As we will read later, the emperor banned the production of powdered tea cakes as an extravagance. Overtly, he did so for economic reasons, as the production of such tea costs more in terms of labor, and ultimately yields less tea. But many scholars say that the ban also had to do with his humble upbringing and a disregard for the pretentious arts of nobles and aristocrats, suggesting that he wanted others to drink the kind of tea his family would have had access to. Either way, these changes created a swirling tea world of bowls and cups, whisked and steeped tea that continued in combination for at least fifty years as people continued brewing the cakes they had, maybe secretly producing more, and meanwhile also started celebrating the new steeped tea with evolving brewing methods and new kinds of teaware, some of which continue today.

Many Western authors mislead the budding tea historian with the idea that tea was “boiled in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), whisked in the Song (960–1279) and steeped beginning in the Ming (1368–1644).” There is truth in this statement, but it is akin to saying “Americans wore bell-bottom jeans in the 1960s.” The fact is that many Americans never wore bell-bottoms, though it was popular at that time amongst certain segments of the American population. In the same way, these brewing methods were trends. China has always been a vast empire, with many ethnicities, cultures and lifeways. These brewing methods were popular at those times among the aristocracy, who, of course, did most of the writing. Just as it is today around the globe, all throughout the amazing, massive empire of China, there were many ways to brew tea, from very simple, unprocessed leaves boiled in a medicine pot or steeped in a bowl to the very complicated rituals popularized by the scholars, artists and nobles of the Tang and Song dynasties.

The problem with using historical records to understand our past is that the rate of literacy goes down with each

generation as you move back in time. Less than half the world was literate just a couple centuries ago. The result is that the perspective of historical records doesn't just narrow the further back you go, but worse, it narrows specifically along class lines, for it was only the wealthy who could read and write. This problem has led some tea scholars in the West to promote the idea that tea began in the Tang Dynasty with Lu Yu, even though Master Lu himself mentions much older books, some of them mentioning tea, and others devoted entirely to tea (though none still exist). Tea is very ancient. And though it did become popular amongst the mainstream of China in the early Tang Dynasty or thereabouts, it was used by many aboriginal tribes for thousands of years before that.

There is also a growing trend of tea lovers who want to intentionally ignore the fact that the commoditization and recreationalization of tea is rather modern, arguing that these ancient manuals were mundane how-to essays, which is simply not true. One of the biggest challenges we have faced in translating the *Cha Jing*, the emperor's *Treatise on Tea* and these Ming Dynasty works is that they are all written in a mystical prose that suggests all kinds of Buddhist, and more often Daoist philosophy, symbolism and poetry—all of which is very difficult to convey. No doubt, as more and more translations are brought to light, brushed by hands more skilled than ours, the essence of this old, beautiful language will be conveyed more clearly to English-speaking tea lovers. As with our previous works in this Classics of Tea series, we have tried our best to translate these works into a working, modern vernacular, mostly because that is easier to do.

Sadly, modern people ignore the wisdom and heritage of indigenous people, including our own ancestors, who were *all* indigenous—be it Asiatic, African, Germanic, Celtic or Native American, *all* of us come from indigenous, tribal peoples. Many scholars ignore the millennia of tea wisdom indigenous people cultivated, choosing instead to date tea's

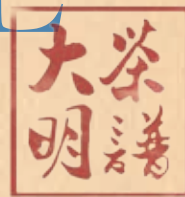
origin to its popularity in mainstream Han Chinese culture. To us, this is belittling of Tea.

These classic works are *very* difficult to translate. Ancient people valued words much more than we do, for their power and grace, and therefore used them more sparingly. Carving on bamboo or stone, or brushing ink to paper all cost more to an author—in terms of time, energy and money. The old ones, therefore, left a lot unsaid. This, of course, wasn't just economically motivated. They wanted the reader to be left with mystery and gaps, spaces that point off the page like calligraphic twirls at the edges of Chinese characters. These old tea masters knew that most of Cha Dao is in the bowl, not on the page; and that the words could, at best, but point towards that spirit flowing from Nature into the Leaf, into us. Daoist sages are renowned for hiding their meanings so that only the earnest seeker who truly practiced and explored the work would find its essence. It's as if it was all written in the sloppy, “grass script” calligraphy—the kind even a Chinese scholar has difficulty reading.

In Kakuzo Okakura's amazing *Book of Tea*, he says that “Translation is always a treason, and as a Ming author observes, can at its best be only the reverse side of a brocade.” Indeed, this translation is but the coarse underside of a glorious and intricately beaded brocade that depicts splendid scenes of Nature, water, fire and tea—and we can see but a faint and upside-down reflection of it by looking through.

We hope that these translations will add to a growing body of tea work in English, and inspire authors to try translating and commenting on these old works, so that we may better understand and appreciate the history and heritage of this Leaf we adore. In this issue, as with our previous translations in this series, we have taken a more literal approach to translation, while trying our best to preserve the essence of the original. However, any and all misleading information, mistakes or awkward phrasings are ours and ours alone. May these translations benefit tea lovers now and those to come!

TEA MANUAL



BY

ZHU QUAN



朱權

朱權茶譜

Zhu Quan (朱權, 1378–1448) was the 17th son of the first Ming emperor, Hongwu (洪武, 1328–1398). When his fourth brother plotted to usurp the throne from the second Ming emperor, Quan, then a fourteen-year-old lad, was taken to Beijing and kept under “palace arrest” until his fourth brother ascended the throne. Consequently, after he was freed, he renounced politics and royalty and moved to the south. He completely refrained from politics, focusing his energy on his commentaries on various topics such as history, literature, poetry, theater, guqin and tea. Judging from the sobriquet he used for this little essay on tea, it was written around 1440, within the last decade of his life. The first Ming emperor banned the labor-intensive and intricately compressed tribute tea cakes in 1391, which also inspired gradual changes in brewing methodology. People moved away from whisking tea to steeping leaves in teapots. In addition, all tribute tea had to be sent to the emperor directly in order to minimize the possibility of bureaucratic corruption such as embezzlement or bribery. Under such circumstances, the traditional Song Dynasty whisked style (*dian cha*) died out within the fifty years leading up to the time Quan wrote this essay. Especially since he had been kept hostage at the palace when his elder brother was executing his coup, and then renounced all relation to a political life, one would think that he would be very cautious about expressing a controversial point of view. However, a good part of the following manual discusses then-forbidden tea methods. Was this a snide way of making a relatively tame political point?



Tasting Tea

Right before the solar term, *guyu*,¹ new tea buds, each but one leaf alone, are plucked to be ground into powder. They are then pressed to remove the moisture inside, ground into powder and finally pressed into round cakes. Some people dry tea leaves with other herbs that overpower their essential aroma and flavor. In general, tea that tastes light and sweet, with a fine, long-lasting aftertaste that awakens the Qi is the best kind of tea. The Bamboo Shoot tea from Mount Meng of Shandong Province is so unique that it is Heavenly.² Even though tea is essential in life, due to its coolness,³ it is not recommended for people with certain ailments to drink too much tea.⁴

Storing Tea

It is best to pick the young buds on a warm, dry day, storing them in a similar climate rather than a cold and humid place. The leaves are placed on a wooden rack with fire burning below to slowly roast them dry. Roast the tea every two or three days⁵ to keep the leaves at body temperature and humidity won't corrupt the tea. If the fire is too harsh, then the leaves will be burned. The tea leaves that are not being roasted should be sealed in an envelope and placed in a high place. If the flavor and taste became stale after some time, then boil them, rather than whisking or steeping, to improve the flavor. To create a tea with Heavenly Fragrance, one shall collect the petals of a newly-blossomed osmanthus.⁶ It is crucial that one only gathers these precious blossoms during a sunny noontide, so they will not overcome the fragrance of the tea.

Whisked Tea (*Dian Cha*⁷)

Before whisking tea, one should warm the bowls first.⁸ If the bowls are cool, then the tea will sink to the bottom. If there is not sufficient tea, then the white froth will not rise. The more tea there is, the easier it is for a white cream to ascend. Put one scoop of tea into the tea bowl and then pour a little hot water to dissolve the powder. Immediately after the powder is dissolved, add an adequate amount of hot water, filling the bowl in two of three thirds while whisking the liquor in graceful circular motions. A bowl that shows no mark where the water was is the best. People nowadays like to trade the fragrance of tea for that of flowers;⁹ among them plum blossoms, osmanthus and jasmine are the best. Put several flowers into tea cups and cover them immediately with hot water. In a matter of seconds, the dried flowers will blossom inside of the cup, opening to the heat and moisture, and one will smell the floral perfume long before the cup touches one's lips.

Scented Tea

Any kind of fragrant flowers is suitable to make scented tea, the best of which exudes but a hint of some favorable aroma. Pick the flowers when they are in bloom. Make a two-tiered bamboo lantern and place the flowers into the lower section while the tea leaves rest on the upper section. Seal the lantern tightly and let it sit overnight. On the following day, open the lantern and replenish the bottom with freshly-picked flowers. Repeat this procedure for several days, until the tea leaves absorb the lovely fragrance of the flowers. It is also possible to employ this technique with borneol instead of flowers.¹⁰



茶 Zhu Quan; artist unknown.

Notes

- 1) *Guyu* (穀雨) literally means “grain rain;” it is the eighth term of the Chinese solar calendar (around April 20th), and also the last one of the spring season. It is named as such because the farmers need rain after they plant rice and other grain seedlings. Therefore, they usually plant the seedlings right before the spring/summer rainy season.
- 2) This special *shixian* tea (石蘚), literally “moss on the rocks” tea came from Mount Meng (蒙山) of Shandong Province (山東). It was so rare that there is not much information about it other than the author's account. However, there is still Purple Bamboo Shoot tea (*zusun*, 紫笋) still made in Jiangsu.
- 3) “Coolness” in a Traditional Chinese Medicine sense.
- 4) The tea of the time was all astringent and green, and people often lacked the variety we have today. Still, some people can't drink too much cool tea even nowadays.
- 5) This may sound like an unrealistic and overbearing task, but in Medieval China, well-to-do families could have up to hundreds of servants for a ten-person household, so having the tea roasted every two to three days was, in fact, possible.
- 6) “Heavenly Fragrance Tea (*tianxiang cha*, 天香茶)” is scented with *Osmanthus fragrans* (*gui hua*, 桂花), a common medicinal herb used in Chinese medicine and cuisine, especially desserts.
- 7) We talked extensively about *dian cha* (點茶) in our translation of the Emperor Song Huizhong's *Treatise on Tea*. This is a type of whisked tea where water is poured repeatedly into the bowl as whisking continues throughout. More than that, however, “*dian cha*” refers to tea made with a “one-pointed mind,” which is the same character used to translate the Buddhist term “*samadhi*,” which also means “the fully-concentrated/one-pointed mind.” This term is deep, but a basic understanding is that once again, tea steeps the sacred and mundane together: a practical technique and powerful meditation in this case.
- 8) Zhu literally uses the word “bake,” but we think he maybe means rinsing them with hot water.
- 9) Literally, “exchange fruits/flowers for tea.”
- 10) In general, this referred to the leaves from the *Dipterocarp* family.

Cauldron

The cauldrons for making tea are the same as those used by Daoist alchemists. The size of them is seven *cun* high and four *cun* in diameter, with three-*cun*-high feet and a one-*cun* opening for air flow.¹¹ The inside of the cauldron is gilded with copper, which is extremely rare nowadays. Mine is a ceramic crucible inlaid with silver, which is even better. The height of the handle rungs is seventeen-and-a-half-*cun*, with woven rattan handles. There are hooks along the sides to hang utensils such as an ash brush, ladles, a sieve for water and a bellows.

Stove for Tea

In antiquity, stoves of this construction did not exist. I installed mine in the forest. Because it is earthenware, it looks like a stove for cooking, except the top is one-and-a-half-*chi* high, with another layer above, which is nine *cun* high, one-and-a-half-*chi* long and one *chi* wide.¹² I've decorated it with poems and odes to Tea. There are two vents on the lower part for adding coal or wood and the stove has two round openings to place water kettles. I positioned a fair-sized rock in the front as a seat for the tea master. I've found an eccentric octogenarian, a man without a name, who is childlike and simpleminded like a child. I have no idea where he is from, either. His attire is also otherworldly, in that he wears crane robes¹³ closed with a hemp belt and a pair of straw shoes. He is slightly hunched by age and his face is covered with countless wrinkles, even onto his neck. He has a pair of topknots on his head. Overall, he is shaped like the character for "chrysanthemum," so I've come to call him "Elder Mums."¹⁴ Each time he prepares tea at this stove, his purity multiplies the virtues of the tea.¹⁵

Mill

It is best to use *qingmeng* stone,¹⁶ as it breaks up phlegm that builds up in the lungs and throat according to Chinese medicine. Other materials are not as beneficial to the tea leaves.

Grinder

Traditionally, tea grinders are made of gold, silver, copper or iron. All of these are prone to corruption,¹⁷ so I favor *qingmeng* stone.

Sieve

The sieve for tea is made out of gauze and is five *cun* in diameter.¹⁸ If the gaps in the gauze are too small, then not enough tea powder will pass through the sieve. On the other hand, if the holes are too large, then the sieve won't sift out unfavorable impurities.

Racks

Most people use wooden racks with intricate and complicated decorations—not me. I use spotted bamboo or purple bamboo, which is the loftiest material for making a rack.

Spoons

Since the purpose of spoon is stirring, it needs to be powerful. In antiquity, people favored golden spoons, though there are many silver and bronze ones nowadays. Bamboo spoons are lightweight. I once had a spoon made of a coconut shell, and it is my favorite. After I had the coconut shell spoon made, I met a man who was blind in both eyes. Amazingly, he made hundreds of bamboo spoons of exactly the same size. Bamboo is suitable for making spoons that are different from the ordinary ones. Even though gold is very expensive, it is not any better than a bamboo spoon.

Whisk

The whisk is made out of bamboo, and those from southern places such as Guangdong and Jiangxi provinces are the best quality. The whisk is usually about five *cun*¹⁹ long. After scooping some tea powder into the bowl and then adding hot water, it is time to start whisking. When the white froth starts to form in clouds, a heavy rain falls in trails. Then it is time to stop whisking.

Bowls

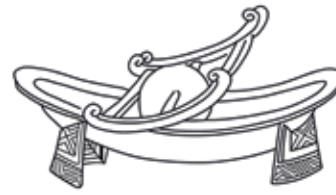
Traditionally, people used tea bowls from Jian'an.²⁰ Those that are decorated with fine pine needles or rabbit's fur are the most sought-after. Nowadays, tea bowls from the *Gan Kiln*²¹ look like those from Jian'an. However, after hot water is poured into the bowls, the hue of the tea liquor as viewed in *Gan* ware is not as bright as that in *Jian* ware. I prefer *Rao* ceramics,²² which offer a gorgeous, pale celadon color when the tea liquor is in them.

Kettle

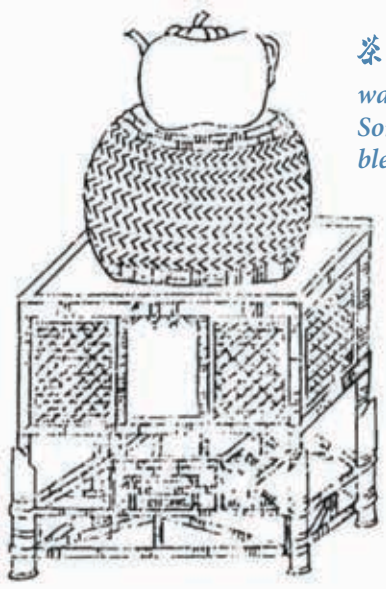
When the kettle is small, the time spent waiting for the water to boil is shorter. Furthermore, smaller kettles are easier to maneuver when pouring into tea bowls. Traditionally, kettles are made of iron and are called "*ying*."²³ During the Song Dynasty, people shied away from iron to avoid the inevitable rust in favor of ewers made of gold or pure silver. My kettle is ceramic and is five *cun* high with a two-*cun* neck and a seven-*cun* spout.²⁴ It is important to boil the water to the perfect point. If the water is not brought to such a boiling point, then a layer of dregs will float on the surface of the tea liquor. On the other hand, if the water is over-boiled, the tea will sink to the bottom of the bowl.



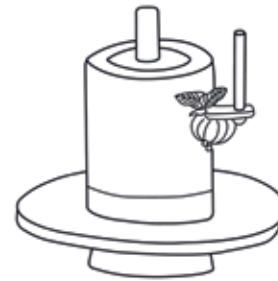
茶 Whisks were large and flat in those days.



茶 Grinders were used to re-powder the cakes for whisking.



茶 Kettles replaced spout-less water-heating vessels from the Song Dynasty, which resembled modern Japanese kamas.



茶 Mills were used to grind the leaves to be pressed into cakes.

Notes

11) Seven *cun* (市寸) is roughly ten inches, while three *cun* is about four inches.

12) 1.5 *chi* is about 1.6 feet, while 9 *cun* is about 12 inches.

13) Literally, such a coat was called a “crane’s cape.” It had sleeves and was not made out of actual crane feathers at the time the author lived. However, it is said that in ancient times, especially in the fifth century, Daoists wore coats made out of actual cranes’ feathers. By the fourteenth century, though, this was a generic name for any overcoat without any buttons. It is unlikely the author is referring to any old overcoat, though, due to all the other Daoist references in the description. Cranes were sacred to Daoists, and the undertones here are also mystical. Cranes balance large bodies on small legs for many hours and are so tranquil they look like they are asleep when they are actually very alert waiting for fish to pass.

14) The double-bun hair style was traditionally reserved exclusively for young female servants. The topknots are likened to the grass radical *ao* (艹) of the character *ju* (菊), and the bottom part of the character to the fanciful shape of the elder’s misshapen body.

15) This paragraph is highly mystical, stylized and very probably metaphoric. In many Daoist stories, the seeker looking for the Daoist master passes by an ordinary person and asks directions to the master’s abode, only to later find out that the ordinary person he asked for directions was, in fact, the master himself. The author

may be alluding to the fact that the brewer find the master inside, and that our highest self then sits on the stone seat and prepares the tea. Also, the story suggests that we not pass by nor dismiss the ordinary. That is not the Way of Tea! Overall, Zhu Quan, a famous Daoist, is having a bit of fun with us, his readers.

16) The *qingmeng* stone (Lapis Chloriti, 青礞石) is the Biotite Schist and Maica Carbonate Schist formed by chloritization.

17) We think he means what we would call rust and/or oxidation.

18) Five *cun* is about six inches.

19) Six inches. This is much bigger than modern tea whisks from Japan.

20) Jian’an (建安) is modern-day Jian’ou City (建甌) in Fujian Province (福建).

21) *Gan* ware (淦窯) is probably *Jizhou* ware (吉州窯), which was made in modern-day Yonghe Township (永和), Ji’an County (吉安), Jiangxi Province (江西).

22) This may be the celadon ware from Jingdezhen (景德鎮), but we can’t be sure.

23) “*Ying* (罌)” refers to a jar with a small mouth and a large belly; these kettles were shaped like such storage jars.

24) Five *cun* is about six inches.

Brewing Tea

It is crucial to boil one's water with flaming coal, which is termed "live fire," so that the water will not be heated in vain. In the beginning, the bubbles appear haphazardly like fish eyes. Then, more air emerges, and the bubbles are like spring water or a string of pearls. At the last stage, the bubbles grow larger and the water boils violently like the high tide. At this point, all the vapor in the water vanishes into the air. This is the so-called "three boiling" method that can only be achieved with lively, flaming coals.

Ranking Water

The tea immortal Qu²⁵ ranks water sources for tea as follows: the Qi spring at the Elder's Village in Qingcheng Mountain²⁶ is the best, Eight Virtue Water from Mt. Zhong²⁷ is the second best, Vermilion Pond at Red Cliff²⁸ is the third best, while the water from Bamboo Root Spring²⁹ is the fourth best. Others might conclude that the water from mountains is superior to that from a river, which is in turn superior to the water from wells. However, Bochu³⁰ commented that the water from the middle of the Yangtze River is the best, while the Stone Spring at Hui Mountain³¹ ranks second. He claims that the Stone Spring at Tiger Hill³² is the third best, while the Danyang Well³³ is the fourth. Daming Well³⁴ is the fifth, Song River³⁵ is the sixth and Hui River³⁶ is the seventh. Others might argue that the water from Kangwang Cave on Mount Lu³⁷ is the best and the Stone Spring at Hui Mountain³⁸ is the second best. The water from under the rocks at Lan Brook in Qizhou³⁹ is the third best and the water from the Lower Caves at Shanzixia, Xiazhou⁴⁰ is the fourth best. The water from Tiger Hill in Suzhou is the fifth best and the Stone Bridge Pond on Mount Lu is the sixth best. The cold water from the middle of the Yangtze River ranks the seventh best while the Xishan waterfall at Hongzhou⁴¹ is the eighth best. The water from upstream of the Hui River, at Botong Mountain in Tangzhou,⁴² is the ninth best and the water from Dingtiandi on Mount Lu is the tenth best. The water from Danyang Well in Runzhou is the eleventh best and the water from Daming Well in Yangzhou ranks the twelfth. The cold water from upstream of the Han River⁴³ in Jinzhou is the thirteenth and the water from Fragrance Brook at Yuxu Cave in Guizhou⁴⁴ is the fourteenth. The water from West Valley, Wuguan at Shangzhou⁴⁵ is the fifteenth and the Song River in Suzhou is the sixteenth. The waterfall in the southwestern slope of Tiantai Mountain⁴⁶ is seventeenth, while the Yuan Spring at Chenzhou⁴⁷ is the eighteenth. The tributary water of the Yanling area of the Tonglu River⁴⁸ in Yanzhou is the nineteenth while the snow-melted river water there ranks twentieth.⁴⁹



茶 Zhu Quan statue at the new Wuyi tea-themed park, which we covered the inauguration of.





茶 Temple on Qingcheng Mountain early in the morning, the best time for gathering spring water.

Notes

25) The tea immortal Qu (臞仙), literally means “emancipated immortal.” This is Zhu Quan’s sobriquet. He recorded 64 *guqin* songs in a work entitled *Fairy Qu’s Fantastic Music for Guqin*, which is the first *guqin* music shorthand tablature in Chinese history, using a notation of fingering rather than pitch. It combines all of the fingering elements into one character, including the specific string and fret for both hands, ways of playing (pluck or press), duration of playing and intensity of each note.

26) Qingcheng Mountain (青城山) is one of the most ancient mountains where Daoists gathered to cultivate themselves millennia ago. It is 68km west of Chengdu City (成都), Sichuan Province (四川). It is a UNESCO world heritage site.

27) Mt. Zhong (鍾山) is near Nanjing City (南京), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

28) The Vermilion Pond (丹潭) is located in Nanchang City (南昌), Jiangxi Province (江西).

29) Bamboo Root Spring (竹根泉) might be on modern-day Hainan Island (海南島).

30) According to *Notes on Jiancha Shuicha* (煎茶水記) written by Zhang Youxin (張又新), around the year 825, Liu Bochū (劉伯芻, 758–818) was Zhang’s father-in-law’s friend, so Zhang probably got this information firsthand.

31) Hui Mountain (惠山) is located in modern-day Wuxi City (無錫), Jiangsu Province.

32) Tiger Hill (虎丘) is near Suzhou City (蘇州), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

33) There are four Danyang Cities (丹陽) in China: Zhenjiang City (鎮江) in Jiangsu Province (江蘇), Ma’anshan City (馬鞍山) in Anhui Province (安徽), Nanjing City (南京) in Jiangsu Province (江蘇), and Fuzhou City (福州) in Fujian Province (福建).

34) Daming Well (大明井) is located in modern-day Yangzhou City (揚州), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

35) The Song River (松江) runs through Suzhou and Shanghai.

36) The Hui River (淮河) runs through Henan (河南), Hubei (湖北), Anhui (安徽) and Jiangsu (江蘇) provinces.

37) Mt. Lu (廬山) is near Jiujiang City (九江), Jiangxi Province (江西). It is a UNESCO world heritage site.

38) Changzhou (常州) is close to modern-day Wuxi City (無錫), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

39) Qizhou (蘄州) is located in modern-day Qichun Township (蘄春), Hubei Province (湖北).

40) Xiazhou (峽州) is located in modern-day Yichang City (宜昌), Hubei Province (湖北).

41) Hongzhou (洪州) is located in modern-day Yuzhang County (豫章), Jiangxi Province (江西).

42) Tangzhou (唐州) is located in modern-day Nanyang City (南陽), Henan Province (河南).

43) The Han River (漢江) originates in Hanzhong City (漢中), Shaanxi Province (陝西).

44) Guizhou (歸州) is located in modern-day Zigui County (秭歸), Hubei Province (湖北).

45) Shangzhou (商州) is located in modern-day Shangluo City (商洛), Shanxi Province (陝西).

46) Tiantai Mountain (天台山) is a famous Buddhist and Daoist site, located in Taizhou City (台州), Zhejiang Province (浙江).

47) Chenzhou City (郴州) is in Hunan Province (湖南).

48) The Tonglu River (桐廬) runs through Zhejiang Province (浙江).

49) We should be both inspired and discouraged by the fact that our masters’ masters had access to so many different kinds of water for tea and could travel around drinking from streams, springs, brooks, tributaries, wells and lakes, comparing and ranking their waters as well as the way they enhanced or detracted from certain teas. This is a call to action for all those who love tea, which means you love Nature. Such experiences shouldn’t be a lost dream; it should be the right of every human on this Earth, beneath Heaven, to find clean water everywhere!

BOOK OF TEA



BY

QIAN CHUNNIAN

錢椿年

錢椿年

EDITED BY

GU YUANQING

顧元慶

顧元慶

錢椿年茶譜



Other than that Qian Chunnian (錢椿年) was from Changshu (常熟), Jiangsu Province (江蘇), not much information about him has survived.

Gu Yuanqing (顧元慶, 1487-1565) came from a wealthy merchant family from Jiangsu Province. He was the only son in the Gu family who liked to read and he collected tens of thousands of books. In the 1540s, he selected the best forty fantasies/short stories from his collection and re-printed them in a work entitled "Novels from Gu's Study." About a decade later, he printed another collection, "Gu's Choice of Forty Writings of the Ming Dynasty," of which eight of them were written by himself.



Preface

I am obsessed with drinking tea. In my twenties, I met Mr. Wu Xinyuan¹ in Yangxian,² and Mr. Guo Yangzhuo in Qinchuan.³ They both enjoyed drinking tea and taught me all about picking, firing and roasting, as well as the whisking of tea, which are all quite simple to understand and difficult to do. After I read the historical accounts of tea from the Tang and Song Dynasties, I learned about all the utensils for brewing tea and how tea leaves were ground into powder, sieved, and pressed into tea cakes, called “petite dragon cakes,” which are extremely precious. As a result of their value, there was a popular saying that went: “Gold is easier to come by than a dragon cake.” Alas, how could an official afford a dragon cake? Recently, I read what Mr. Qian wrote about tea, and his writings were similar to what I’ve learned from Mr. Wu and Mr. Guo. However, Mr. Qian collected many different people’s comments on tea without any collation, and the result was not really a manual for tea lovers, so I edited his writings in my spare time and appended Wang Youshi’s bamboo stove and six related accounts at the end to share with all Chajin.⁴ This is that compendium, written by Gu Yuanqing from Wu County.

Introduction

Tea is a magnificent tree growing in the South. Tea trees range from one or two feet to tens of feet tall. In Bashan⁵ and the river gorges of Sichuan, there are tea trees growing to such a size that it would take two people hand in hand to embrace their circumference. Because these trees are so very tall, the branches need to be cut down to harvest the leaves.⁶ The shape of tea trees resembles those of other Camellia. The leaves look like those of a gardenia and the little white flowers are so many lovely rosettes. Tea seeds are like those of palms with stems like clover, while the root system is similar to that of walnut trees.⁷

Ranking Teas

There are many different teas throughout the empire. For instance, the following are all famous teas: Stone Flower Tea from Mengding Mountain at Jiannan,⁸ Russet Bamboo Tea from Guzhu, Huzhou,⁹ Bright Moon Tea from Bijian, Xiazhou,¹⁰ Si’an Tea from Huojing, Qiongzhou,¹¹ Thin Slice Tea from Qujiang,¹² True Fragrance Tea from Badong,¹³ Boyan Tea from Fuzhou,¹⁴ White Dew Tea from Hongzhou,¹⁵ Yangxian Tea from Changzhou, Juyan Tea from Wuzhou,¹⁶ Yangpo Tea from Yashan,¹⁷ Qihuo Tea¹⁸ from Longan,¹⁹ Tall Duru Tea from Qianyang²⁰ and tea from Na Brook and Plum Peak in Lu River.²¹ If I had to rank these, then Stone Flower is the best, Russet Bamboo is second, while Bright Moon is the third. Unfortunately, they are all difficult to come by.

Cultivating Tea

Treat the tea trees the same as gourds and the tea leaves will be ready to be harvested in three years.²² It is better if tea growing on a cliff faces eastward, while tea trees growing in the forest are best situated in shady sites. As for tea leaves, russet ones are better than green ones.

- 1) Wu Xinyuan (吳心遠) was a member of the local gentry.
- 2) Yangxian (陽羨) is modern-day Yixing City (宜興), Jiangsu Province.
- 3) Qinchuan (琴川) is modern-day Changshu City (常熟), Jiangsu Province.
- 4) Yuchuanzi (玉川子) is the sobriquet of the great Chajin poet, Lu Tong (盧仝, 790–835) who wrote the *Ode of Seven Bowls of Tea*.
- 5) Bashan (巴山) reaches from modern-day eastern Sichuan (四川) to Yichang City (宜昌), Hubei Province (湖北).
- 6) Originally written by Lu Yu. But aboriginals have always had the means to climb the trees and rarely cut whole branches.
- 7) This section is a direct quote from the *Tea Sutra* by Lu Yu, which we translated in the Extended Edition, September 2015.
- 8) “Shihua (石花),” literally “stone flower,” came from Mengding Mountain (蒙頂山), modern-day Yaan City (雅安), Sichuan Province (四川).
- 9) This tea is called “Zisun (紫笋)” since the tea buds are purplish in color and look like bamboo shoots. Guzhu (顧渚) is in modern-day Changxing County (長興), Zhejiang Province (浙江).
- 10) “Mingyue Tea (明月),” literally means “Bright Moon,” because the tea is half-roasted. As a result, the crescent-shaped, shiny, jade-colored tea leaves recall a full moon. It is a famous tea in Bijian (碧澗), literally “Jade Stream in the Valley,” Yichang City (宜昌), Hubei Province (湖北).
- 11) Two famous tea production lines are Huojing (火井, literally “Fire Well”) and Si’an (思安, literally “Pondering Peace/Stability”) from Qiongzhou (邛州), modern-day Qionglai County (邛崃), Sichuan Province (四川).
- 12) A rare dark black tea, Bopian (薄片, literally “Thin Slice”) can be found in Anhua County (安化), Hunan Province (湖南).
- 13) Zhenxiang Tea (真香, literally “True Fragrance”) grows in modern-day Badong County (巴東), Hubei Province (湖北).
- 14) Boyan Tea (柏岩, literally “Cypress Cliff”) grows in modern-day Fuzhou City (福州), Fujian Province (福建).
- 15) Bailu Tea (白露, literally “White Dew”) grows in modern-day Jiangxi Province (江西).
- 16) Juyan tea (舉岩, literally “Emerged from the Boulders”) grows in modern day Jinhua City (金華), Zhejiang Province (浙江). It is withered but not rolled, so it appears straight and flat, and the tea liquor looks a milky, greenish-white.
- 17) Yangpo Tea (陽坡, literally “Sunny Slope”) grows in Ganzhou City (贛州), Jiangxi Province (江西).
- 18) Qihuo Tea (騎火, literally “Riding Fire”). During the Spring and Autumn period, Duke Wen of Jin (晉文公, 697–628 BCE) was driven out of his fief by civil war, returning after nineteen years. Among his strategists, Jie Zhitui (介之推) was most helpful. However, Jie left the palace and returned home. The Duke misinterpreted this as betrayal and set fire to his neighborhood, killing Jie. Out of remorse, the Duke decreed that no fire was allowed on the day of Jie Zhitui’s death. To this day, Chinese people eat cold food on this day. The holiday often falls the day before the solar term, qingming (清明). Teas that are picked before qingming are referred to as “qihuo” tea: “before the day when fire is allowed.”
- 19) Unfortunately, over the long history of China, there have been several places that have been named Longan (龍安).
- 20) Qianyang (黔陽) is modern-day Hongjiang (洪江), Hunan Province (湖南).
- 21) Lu River (瀘川) is modern-day Lu County (瀘), Sichuan Province (四川).
- 22) Farmers in the fifteenth century did not harvest tea trees younger than three years old, so he is most likely referring to wild tea trees here.

Picking Tea

*Tuanhuang*²³ is famous for “one flag with two rifles,” which means each contains “one bud with two leaves.” Leaves that are picked in the morning are true tea, while those picked later will be bitter. The best time to pick tea leaves is around the solar term *guyu*. As long as the leaves are picked when it is sunny, and roasted and stored properly, leaves of all different sizes will make fine tea.

Storage

It is best to pick tender, young leaves for tea. Tea leaves tend to absorb aromas, so try not to store tea with food, anything with a strong fragrance, or medicinal herbs. Tea is best stored in a warm and dry environment, rather than cold and humid places. As a result, tea lovers often roast young leaves sealed in their containers²⁴ every two or three days. The best temperature for roasting is about body temperature, so as to maintain the appropriate humidity. If the fire is too strong, then the leaves will be burned and become undrinkable.²⁵

VARIOUS SCENTED TEAS

Orange Tea

Cut orange peels into thin slices and mix with high quality tea at a ratio of one part to five. Place the mixture on tightly woven linen and warm over a fire. Then, cover the warm tea mixture with a clean cotton cloth for four to six hours. Seal the roasted tea in envelopes made of thick, tough paper such as *Jianlian*,²⁶ then wrap the envelopes in the cotton cloth again to dry before putting them away.

Lotus Tea

Before sunrise, force open a blossoming lotus bud and pour in a handful of tea. Wrap the petals with some hemp stalks and leave the tea inside of the bud overnight. Pick apart the flower the following morning and pour the tea leaves into a *Jianlian* paper envelope and roast them dry. Repeat the same procedure several times, until the tea smells fantastic.

Other Flowers

Many flowers are good choices for making scented teas, such as osmanthus (*Osmanthus fragrans*), jasmine, rose, all the flowers from the orchid family (*Cymbidium*), orange blossoms, cape jasmine (*Gardenia jasminoides*), Lady Bank's rose (*Rosa banksiae*) and plum blossoms. When these flowers are in season, pick them before they are fully open, and while they are still exuding a strong fragrance. Depending on the amount of tea, estimate the amount of blossoms needed. If there are too many blossoms, the flavor of the tea will be overpowered. On the other hand, if the blossoms are too few, then the fragrance will not come through. Start with a ratio of three parts tea for every one part blossom. Osmanthus flowers need to be prepared by cutting off the stems and sepals, washing off the dust and removing insects. Put one layer of tea under one layer of flowers in a ceramic jar and keep layering them until the jar is full. Use paper and

big bamboo leaves to wrap the jar up very tightly and boil the whole ceramic jar in a big pot. Take the leaves out and wait until they are cool to the touch. Then, put them into an envelope and roast them until they are dry. The same procedure can be applied to all the flowers mentioned above.

Notes

23) *Tuanhuang* (團黃) is tea from modern-day Yingshan County (英山), Hubei Province (湖北). It was selected as tribute tea starting in the Tang Dynasty (618–907).

24) We think he means paper envelopes here. It is unclear if there is another kind of container.

26) This section is a direct quote from Zhu Quan's work, with some minor changes.

26) *Lianzhi* (連紙) is a kind of paper similar to sack kraft paper in that it is made with a higher percentage of pulp than normal writing paper. As a result, it is more tear-resistant than most other kinds of paper. *Jianlian zhi* is the *lian zhi* made in Fujian Province (福建).

茶 Organic Tieguan-yin aged with roses for around fifteen years in the Center. It is quite wonderful tea!





FOUR ESSENTIALS OF BOILING WATER FOR TEA

Water

If the water is not sweet, then it will diminish the taste of the tea. Therefore, traditionally, water is foremost in making tea. In general, water from a mountain spring is best, river water is second, and well water is the worst. Among waters found in the mountains, those milky springs that meander are better.²⁷ Do not draw from waterfalls that splash and crash, running too fast. Drinking too much water from such sources will cause problems in the neck.²⁸ For river water, remote rivers are better than those that are too close to civilization. On the other hand, wells that are frequented by people more often are always better.²⁹ Do not use well water to boil tea if it looks cloudy or creamy yellow, like the yellowish innards of cooked crabs, or if it tastes bitter or salty.

Rinse the Tea Leaves

Before boiling, the tea leaves need to be rinsed with hot water to remove the dust and coolness.³⁰ Then the tea will taste great.

Boil the Water

The tea leaves should be roasted over a slow fire while the water for tea is boiled with a “live flame.” This so-called “live flame” is charcoal with a rising, flaming fire that keeps the water from boiling in vain, so as to culture the tea properly.³¹ In the beginning, water boils like fish eyes, scattering on the surface, and a slight noise starts to rise. Then, more bubbles emerge from all directions like a fresh spring, followed by a string of pearls. After that, the water boils violently, like high tide, and all the vapors start to vanish from the water, which is called “old man water.” This “three boil method” can only be achieved with flaming coals. Also, if there is too much water for the tea, then a white foam will not form. On the other hand, if there is too much tea and not enough water, then a creamy porridge-like surface will form.³²

Selections

The smaller the tea kettle, the shorter the time it takes for the water to boil, and the easier it will be to maneuver

when preparing tea. If the kettle is too big, then it takes too long for the water to boil, and the tea will not taste good. Pots³³ and kettles are best made out of silver or tin, while ceramic ones are second best.

When the tea liquor looks pale, then it is best to use black-colored bowls. A dark bowl made in Jian’an with decoration of fine rabbit’s fur lines is the best, because the bowl itself is thick. After the bowls are preheated, the tea will last for a longer time. Bowls made in other places are inferior in that they are either thinner or of other colors.

Notes

27) Some movement is good for spring water; it filters the water and moves the Qi. Too much movement and the water gets rough. The best is when there is a bio-dynamic, slow movement from one pool to the next. As we have discussed in previous issues, water from the top is always better than that from the bottom. (Try experimenting with your own water jar.) Therefore, when the water moves from pool to pool, it is refined, since the topmost layer slowly flows to the next, and so on.

28) We think maybe he is referring to thyroid problems, but we aren’t completely sure.

29) Stagnant water is not good for tea. The spring water in the Center starts to lose its vibrancy after around a week. Wells that are frequented would therefore have more movement.

30) Coolness in Traditional Chinese Medicine terms.

31) As we discussed in our issue on fire in August 2015, the more “lively” the coals, the better, as you want to heat the water as quickly as possible.

32) This is not exactly the same as the Zhu edition. So either there is a mis-transcription in the modern Zhu edition, or Gu did not agree with Zhu’s writing on this.

33) The term he uses, a “*Chadiao* (茶銚),” is a kind of small pot/kettle with a long handle for heating water and a spout to pour hot water out.

THREE ESSENTIALS FOR WHISKING TEA

Notes

Clean the Utensils

The kettles, bowls and spoons get dirty or rust easily and will then contaminate the tea, so it is imperative to clean these utensils before each session.

Preheat the Bowls

When making tea, it is important to preheat the bowls. If the bowls are warm, then it is easier to form a white foam while whisking. If the bowls are cool, then the color of the tea won't reach its full potential.³⁴

Selecting Snacks

Tea itself has a true fragrance, fabulous taste, and gorgeous color. As a result, during whisking, it is not advisable to serve any of the followings foods, which have a strong aroma of their own. For example, pine nuts, oranges, tangerines, almonds, lotus seeds, Lady Bank's roses (*Rosa banksiae*), plum blossoms, jasmine, rose, and osmanthus tend to overpower the aroma of a tea.³⁵ Food with strong flavors, such as milk, Saturn (doughnut) peaches, litchi, dragon eyes (*longyan*), Asian pears and loquats will also impact a tea.³⁶ Therefore, when savoring fine tea, it is imperative not to serve snacks like these so as to enjoy the true flavor and aroma of the tea. As a result, if I do choose to serve delicacies with tea, I select refined foods such as the following, all of which go well with tea: walnuts, hazelnuts, watermelon seeds, jujube seeds, water chestnuts, Indian almonds (*Terminalia catappa*), chestnuts, ginko seeds, Chinese yam (*Dioscorea polystachya*), dry bamboo shoots, sesame, lettuce and celery.³⁷

Medicinal functions of tea

According to *A Supplement to Materia Medica*, written by Chen Cangqi,³⁸ "Good tea can quench people's thirst, help people digest food, dissolve phlegm, reduce the need for sleep, facilitate proper urination, brighten the eyes³⁹ and bring clarity of mind." According to the most famous literary figure of the Song Dynasty, Su Shi,⁴⁰ tea can help you deal with your worries⁴¹ and digest heavy food.⁴² Some people cannot live without tea every day, while other people feel that they should not drink tea at all due to specific ailments. Even so, it is a good idea to gargle with strong tea immediately after each meal to get rid of an undesirable aftertaste in the mouth. Since the tea is spit out after that, the stomach and spleen are not affected. In addition, any residual food stuck between teeth will eventually loosen and fall out after several such gargles. Without the need to keep picking at whatever is stuck between teeth, and therefore harming the teeth, food between the teeth will disappear before you know it. As a result, the teeth will suffer less from picking and be healthier. Since the tea is not for drinking, rather only for gargling, medium- or low-quality tea will suffice for this.⁴³

34) He literally says that the tea color "will not float." Chinese use the same expression to refer to something that "stops the color from developing fully." This is not only used in tea; it can also be said about anything. Another meaning of this phrase is that there is not enough contrast between two things to create a pleasant aesthetic.

35) You can experiment with eating one thing while smelling another that has a strong aroma. Human beings tend to pick up smell over taste. However, this section seems contradictory at first glance, because in the previous section on methods of making scented tea, flowers and tea leaves are roasted or scented together. But it should be understood that scented tea is homogeneous after the time-consuming process of fusing the tea and flowers, and thus different from eating food with a strong aroma while drinking unscented tea. Alas, tea is such a delicate and refined art!

36) Sometimes, it is not necessarily that the food tastes too strong, but that the combination of certain foods will create strange flavors, as we discussed in our January 2017 issue on food and tea.

37) There is another vegetable in his list that is unfamiliar to us. A modern, popular vegetable with similar characters is *tonghao* (茼蒿, *Chrysanthemum coronarium*). However, we would say that *tonghao* is a strong-tasting vegetable and therefore not what the author is referring to.

38) Chen Cangqi (陳藏器) was an official in Chang'an (長安), the capital of the Tang Dynasty. He was very interested in botany and Chinese medicine, so he wrote *A Supplement to Materia Medica* (本草拾遺) in the 730s, trying to make the Chinese medicinal herb bible more comprehensive.

39) "To brighten the eyes" is an old use for tea. In some circumstances it may refer to sharpening eyesight, but it usually is a spiritual reference: in Traditional Chinese Medicine, there are three energies in the body and world: Vitality (*Jing*, 精), Energy (*Qi*, 氣) and Spirit (*Shen*, 神). The *Shen* is the cosmic energy that connects us to the Heavens. They say that when the *Shen* descends to the heart, opening it, our eyes light up. This is why saints are typically depicted with bright eyes in Chinese art. And most of us here have experienced such a bowl of tea!

40) Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037–1101) was a genius in literature, poetry, calligraphy, painting and cooking, among many other talents. In his old age, he was exiled to the southernmost island in China due to his political incorrectness. Traveling to the remote frontier and trying various exotic produce along the way made him unhealthy. Without his usual literary companions, he developed a habit of writing letters to his friends, commenting on whatever he was reading or exchanging recipes and medicinal formulae. After his death, many people published notes on various topics such as literature, food and medicine formulae, claiming Su had written them. *Notes from Chouchi* (仇池筆記) is one such collection.

41) "*Fan* (煩)" usually refers to defilement, worries, problems or things that bother people. In other words, it tends to refer to mental rather than physical ailments. There is also a formula in Traditional Chinese Medicine called "Eight Ingredients for Ridding Oneself of Worries (八味除煩湯)" that helps patients with insomnia, anxiety and/or irritability to calm down. However, in the following sentence, the author says that "using strong tea to gargle after each meal can eliminate the "taste of *fan* (煩味)," which in that instance might mean undesirable aftertastes in the mouth.

42) Both of these can be taken literally or as spiritual metaphors, once again marrying the sacred and mundane through tea.

43) You have to love this passage!

APPENDIX

Inscription for the Gentleman of Principle⁴⁴ by Sheng Yong from Xishan⁴⁵

*Shaped like the vault of Heaven and the square of Earth:⁴⁶
Bamboo sheathed metal, bamboo wrapped clay.*

Within, a lively fire burns,

Bearing sounds of waves on the river Xiang.

One drop of sweet dew

Cleanses my poetic core.

A pure wind sweeps beneath my sleeves,

Carrying me beyond the realm and into the Void.⁴⁷

—Translated by Steven Owyong



The Six Departments⁴⁸ of tea utensils are now established, and all the implements are stored within it, supporting the Gentleman of Principle in preparing tea amidst springs and rocks, mountains, studios and pavilions. The Gentleman of Principle is fervent in all things, so he is granted the title of state governor.⁴⁹ According to the ten parts of the *Tea Sutra*—namely, Origins, Implements, Processing, Utensils, Brewing, Drinking, Records, Production, Omissions, and Tenets—of the utensils in Part Four, there are none that may be eliminated. The lack of any utensil signifies the neglect of the other nine parts, and the tea is thus wholly ruined. Even though the utensils are listed in the fourth section, they are essential in brewing tea as well. If any of the utensils are missing, then the rest of the nine parts are useless, and no tea can be prepared. The design of the Six Departments and of each utensil is genius, so that all the utensils for tea can be placed in one container for easy storage. In addition, use the spring water from Hui Mountain and the tea from Yangxian—otherwise, alas, ruination! As for Master Lu’s utensil case, this he fully described in the *Tea Sutra*: weave it using the hard glossy skin of Xiang bamboo. Since a printing of it is attached, I will not spend much time describing its appearance.

—Dated to the Grain Rain Days of the third month, 1500. Written by Sheng Yu, Tea Immortal of Mount Hui

THE SIX DIVISIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

First, the Jian Town

Since tea leaves should be sealed tightly, they are stored inside a bamboo container. It should be stored as high as possible to avoid humidity, which would diminish its flavor. Ancient people roasted tea leaves with fire regularly to keep them at body temperature as often as possible, so the tea leaves do not dry out. Nowadays, the storage container is referred to as “Jian Town.”

Gu’s note: According to *Record of Tea* by Cai Xiang,⁵⁰ a group of people enjoyed tea so much that they built a citadel to enclose all the nice tee treas and named the “town” Jian’an.⁵¹

Second, the Yuntun⁵²

When gathering spring water, it is best to draw it from the source, where the spring is at its purest and cleanest. In order to maintain its fragrance, it is best to take some pebbles and store them in a jar along with the spring water until it is brewed with tea. If the spring water gets flat, then the tea will not reach its full potential. Previous generations commented that spring water from Hui Mountain is the best. Nowadays, it has been renamed as “Yuntun,” which means “aggregate of clouds.” The “cloud” here refers to the spring water, which can be stored in this vessel.⁵³ Even though one works with other petty officials in the mundane world, if one can rest amongst the clouds of clean spring water, then one is lofty and has risen out of the quotidian world in one’s heart.

Notes

44) “Kujiejun (苦節君),” literally means “the lofty gentleman who endures a lot of hardship.” The character for a bamboo “joint (節)” is the same character as that for “integrity.” Therefore, Sheng puns here, lauding the bamboo stove for being a “person of integrity” and for working hard under terrible circumstances, yet never complaining.

45) Sheng Yong (盛頤, 1418–1492) was from modern-day Wuxi City (無錫), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

46) Its bottom bamboo rack is square and the soft cushion that the kettle sits on is round. The ancient Chinese believed that Heaven is round while the Earth is square.

47) Since the furnace is made out of latticed bamboo strips, air can pass through the entire object, which marries the sacred and mundane.

48) The Central Secretariat (中書省) was the leader of all six divisions that governed China during the Ming Dynasty.

49) Actually, Sheng himself was a state governor. So he might be comparing himself to the object that is steadfast with upright principles and is hard-working.

50) Cai Xiang (蔡襄, 1012–1067) wrote the *Record of Tea* (茶錄) around 1048–1051.

51) Jian’an (建安) could be near Jian’ou City (建甌) in Fujian Province (福建).

52) “Yuntun (雲屯),” literally means “aggregate of clouds.”

53) This sentence distinguishes “cloud aggregate” as the vessel for storing spring water for tea, as opposed to the location of the spring.

Third, the Dark Mansion: Coal Basket⁵⁴

Coal is an object that looks pitch dark and is strong and tough in nature. When it encounters fire, it can create a ferocious flame. Whatever touches it will be harmed by it, and whatever violates it will be burned. It is not unlike an official from the Justice Department who can intimidate crooks and criminals, even from afar. The gentleman of principle becomes even more powerful with its help. Furthermore, it is also known as “dark silver,” which reveals its treasure within only to those who know its ways. Therefore, it is suitable to call it the “dark mansion.”

Fourth, the Magistrate of Water: Water Container⁵⁵

The true flavor of tea lies in the leaves and buds, and can only be developed after they are rinsed with water. After immersing the tea leaves in water, more spring water is added. When the water starts to hum and buzz, then a nice fragrance arises from the cauldron. Eventually, all the gentleman’s entourage becomes dirty after use. Therefore, it is very important to use water to clean all of the utensils. I’ve named this utensil “Magistrate of Water” because gentlemen clean themselves with water in dishes, and filth is thereby cleansed away. The body is then uncontaminated again. In other words, the water container helps the gentleman to start every day with a fresh, clean slate. Is this not a good moral for people?⁵⁶

Fifth, the Department of Utensils⁵⁷

*Shangxian*⁵⁸ is the ancient name for a stone *ding*, the three-legged cauldron for cooking.

*Guijie*⁵⁹ is the bamboo brush that cleans the pots.

*Fenyong*⁶⁰ is the spoon, which Master Lu Yu called “*shuize*.” In general, for every two *sheng* of water, one *liang* of tea is used.⁶¹

Dihuo is the bronze spoon that scoops the coals and moves them around.⁶²

Jianghong are the bronze fire tongs.⁶³

Zhiquan is the scale for tea.⁶⁴ Every one *liang* of tea leaves requires two *sheng* of water.

Tuanfeng is the green bamboo fan.⁶⁵

Luchen is for washing the tea bowl.⁶⁶

Jingfei is the bamboo frame, which the Tea Sutra refers as “*zhifu*.”⁶⁷

Zhuchun is the ceramic kettle.⁶⁸

Yunfeng is the knife to cut fruit with.⁶⁹

Gandun is the wooden cutting board.⁷⁰

Chuoxiang are tea cups from Fujian Province.⁷¹

Liaoyun is the bamboo tea spoon.⁷²

Najing is the bamboo tea holder.⁷³

Shouwu is the tea cloth for wiping up.⁷⁴

These are the sixteen utensils in brewing tea that are stored together, so as to serve the gentleman with principle. Therefore, they are all given a title for better management, for they all exhibit inherent virtues, elegance, and discipline, which is why they can work together under the proper and noble leadership of the tea brewer.

Sixth, the Taste and Aroma Inspector⁷⁵

In the olden times, tea farmers added a trace amount of borneol during the process to make some tribute tea cakes smell stronger. In spite of their intention to enhance the fragrance, the original flavor of the tea was actually lost in doing so. Furthermore, once such flavored tea is brewed, the artificial flavor will stain the cauldrons and tea bowls. Other people added food such as jujubes,⁷⁶ oranges, green onions, and ginger while whisking, which is even worse. Nowadays, the tea produced in Yangxian is highly valued by tea lovers. In addition, the brewing method most practiced is in Zhaozhou’s tradition.⁷⁷ In that tradition, the tea is brewed light and goes well with bland food, such as bamboo, Indian almonds (*Terminalia catappa*), watermelon seeds, celery or other bland greens. Therefore, the God of Xiang River⁷⁸ is in charge of setting up an inspector to screen off those strong-flavored foods.



茶 Charcoal basket and water container illustrations from another Ming Dynasty author, Mao Yixiang’s work “Tea Utensils with Illustrations.”



Postscript

Gu Yuanqing also goes by his style name, Dashi Shanren, the boulder man from the mountain. No one knows where he is from. I only know that he was a long-time friend of my fellow townsman, Wang Tianyu.⁷⁹ Wang is an erudite who enjoys ancient affairs, and his friends are mostly local esquires. In his old age, Wang grew tired of living in the city and moved to the shady side of Mount Ming. He only socializes with Gu Yuanqing and Yue Dai during the day. Yue is a hermit from Suzhou whose sobriquet is Zhangyu. He is a fine painter and his calligraphy is almost as good as the great calligrapher Mi Fu (1051–1107).⁸⁰ Among this circle, I have met two out of the three, so I can infer the personality of the other one. I read his *Tea Manual* today and it is certain that he must have indulged himself in books throughout his life to be able to write anything even remotely of the caliber of this manual. As a result, I can also picture who he was from his books. I so enjoy leaving this manual on my desk for all my guests to enjoy.

—Written by Mao Yixiang from Guaian⁸¹



Notes

54) “Wufu (烏府)” literally means “dark mansion.”

55) The second character of “shuicao (水槽)” is a homophone of “cao (曹),” which could be a last name, or a suffix to denote general officials in cities and counties. In this case, “water container (水槽),” is then the officer who is in charge of the water affairs of the city or county (水曹).

56) The author is referencing more than just keeping one’s body clean, but also purifying the spirit and starting each day fresh, without the negativities of the past. As Wu De often says, “Cha Dao is eighty percent cleaning, inside and out!”

57) “Qiju (器局)” literally means the “department of utensils.”

58) “Shangxiang (商象)” literally means “Elephant of the Shang Dynasty” (1675 BCE–1046 BCE). Some of the *ding* (鼎) from the Shang Dynasty were decorated with elephants. Therefore, some people refer to the *ding* as “shangxiang.”

59) “Guijie (歸潔)” literally means “to become clean again.”

60) “Fenyong (分盈)” literally means “to divide what was originally full.”

61) One *sheng* (升) is equal to 1.035 liter. One *liang* (兩) is equal to 37 grams or 1.3 oz.

62) “Dihuo (遞火)” literally means “to pass the fire around.”

63) “Jianghong (降紅)” literally means “descending red.”

64) “Zhiquan (執權)” literally means “to exercise authority.”

65) “Tuanfeng (團風)” literally means “round wind.”

66) “Luchen (灑塵)” literally means “dripping off the dust.”

67) “Jingfei (靜沸)” literally means “boils quietly.” “Zhifu (支腹)” literally means “supporting the belly.” However, this utensil is not called by this name in the modern version of the *Tea Sutra*, which we used to make our translation for the Extended Edition of September 2015, and may therefore have another name as well.

68) “Zhuchun (注春)” literally means “to pour in springtime.”

69) “Yunfeng (運鋒)” literally means “to maneuver the blade.”

70) “Gandun (甘鈍)” literally means “sweet and dull.”

71) “Chuoxiang (啜香)” literally means “to sip fragrance.”

72) “Liaoyun (撩雲)” literally means “to touch the clouds lightly.”

73) “Najing (敬納)” literally means “present to you respectfully.”

74) “Shouwu (受汙)” literally means “to receive filth.”

75) “Pinsi (品司)” literally means “the inspector who tastes.”

76) This could be dates or jujubes.

77) Zhaozhou (趙州, 778–897) was a Zen master who, like most such masters, often used nonverbal expressions to point at Zen-mind. One of his teachings is in Wu De’s book *Zen & Tea One Flavor*.

78) The “God of Xiang River (湘君)” is a mythical god who governs the Xiang River in Hunan Province, according to a collection of Shamanic rituals written by Qu Yuan (屈原, 340 BCE–278 BCE). We don’t know what this god has to do with guarding tea from these foods, however, as the reference is either mystical, colloquial or just beyond us.

79) Wang Tianyu (王天雨), whose official name is “Ji (濟).”

80) Mi Fu (米芾, 1051–1107) was one of the most famous painters and calligraphers of the Song Dynasty (960–1279). He developed a painting style not unlike the impressionists in that the entirety of each painting is comprised of dots varying in size. The only difference is that Mi painted in monochrome ink. A true artist of heart and mind, he could not abide by all the pretentious hypocrisy and bureaucratic nonsense of the city and was, therefore, only appointed to a low-ranking title as a result of his “uncivilized” behavior, which the intelligent, and posterity, recognize as ingenuity.

81) Mao Yixiang (茅一相) was from Wuxing City (吳興), Zhejiang Province (浙江). He was a contemporary of Gu Yuanqing. Mao is the author of *Tea Utensils with Illustrations (Chaju Tuzan, 茶具圖讚)*.



MING CHINA MEETS RENAISSANCE EUROPE

茶人: *James Norwood Pratt*

Aside from the new brewing methods instigated by the Ming decree that banned powdered tea, the Ming Dynasty also brought Europe and China into contact and trade for the first time in history, and the Leaf began Her own “journey to the West.” This changed the history not just of tea, but of the world. Once again James Norwood Pratt has honored Global Tea Hut by putting brush to paper, writing this wonderful article on the contact between two worlds.

A part from a stray Marco Polo or so, very few Occidentals and Orientals had ever met face to face until Vasco da Gama of Portugal sailed around Africa's Cape of Good Hope and, guided by the Arab pilot Ahmad ibn Majid, reached India in 1498. It was almost twenty years after da Gama's voyage when, for the first time, a European vessel stood off the coast of China. The ship was over fifteen thousand sea miles and almost two years' sail from its Portuguese home port. To return, her captain had to find his way through a maze of uncharted rocks, shoals and islands, cross the Indian Ocean, beat his way back around the Cape into the Atlantic, and then face a still-considerable voyage to Lisbon, all in a small, square-rigged ship that was hard to handle under the best of circumstances and absolutely helpless in a storm or against a headwind. Such voyages to China were to multiply with astonishing rapidity.

The appearance of the Portuguese, and later the Spanish, in Asian waters was of no great importance to the Ming authorities in China or their neighbors in Japan and elsewhere. The seas of

East Asia were full of shipping, both merchant ships and the pirates who preyed on them. At home, the Ming government had restored order: cities revived, trade flourished, and silver became the national currency. China's fine arts, like her textiles, porcelain, and printing, had all attained a rare perfection and were avidly sought after. Europeans simply joined the busy commercial exchanges in this most prosperous part of the world. In return for her luxuries, China soon received from her new European customers the sweet potato and peanuts, but also more efficient firearms, missionaries and tobacco. She absorbed Spanish-American silver brought to Manila annually by a galleon from Acapulco.

Contact and commerce with Japan was officially restricted to the port of Ningbo; Fuzhou was designated the official port for the Philippines. The Portuguese carried on a sort of buccaneering trade up and down the Chinese coast for forty years until the Emperor finally granted them a legal port of entry and base of operations. This way he could collect the import-export duties he was missing otherwise and keep the “foreign devils” under the Ming

thumb. The place selected was a rocky peninsula about three miles long that jutted off an island in the Pearl River Delta a good many miles downstream from the major port of Guangzhou (Canton). The Portuguese named the place Macao and received exclusive rights to trade there. China was to reclaim Macao in 1999. The poet W. H. Auden has written, “In 1557 a weed from Catholic Europe took root between the yellow mountain and the sea and grew on China imperceptibly.”

Although introduced to China, Europe had yet to be introduced to tea. After the grant of Macao, it would take a little over fifty years before Amsterdam received Europe's first tiny shipment of tea, and a full century before tea could be bought in London. In China, meanwhile, tea kept steadily developing alongside the other arts and crafts. As the tea gods ordained, so it happened that the Ming Dynasty witnessed discoveries and innovations that radicalized tea processing and tea preparation alike. Loose leaf tea and the teapot for steeping it flourished in the Ming, destined to be ready and waiting for export to the other side of the planet.



茶 Western tea brewing, with a large pot, long steeps and large cups, which is sometimes called “Brown Betty” brewing, is traceable back to the Ming Dynasty. At that time, the Chinese brewed tea in large pots, letting the tea steep for longer durations as they chatted or maybe wrote poetry. This common tea, steeped in pots, spread to the West and became traditional there as well.

一杯改變世界



茶 The East India Company logo.

The first Ming Emperor Hongwu in 1391 decreed Tribute Tea need no longer be steamed and compressed into cakes. As loose leaf tea became the norm, tea masters produced pan-fired green tea and invented the first oolong tea, flower-scented tea and even red tea. To steep them, potters in Yixing began producing their legendary teapots. Scholars, tea lovers and potters worked together to achieve wares beautiful to hold as well as behold. Buddhist farmer monks were probably the most influential of all in tea development. Da Fang (1567–1672), abbot of a temple on Lao Zhu Ling Shan in Anhui, developed a tea still produced today. Monks from Songluo in Anhui took their skills with them to Mount Wuyi in Fujian and came up with oolong. The year 1541 saw publication of many great treatises on tea, like the *Book of Tea*, the *Cha Pu* (Tea Handbook) by Gu Yuanqing. He provides a description of teas of the time from manufacture to preparation and serving. These were the teas enjoyed during the Golden Age of prosperous

and powerful Ming China at its finest hour, the reign of Emperor Wanli (1573–1619), who “held the gorgeous East in fee” at the time those lost, hungry Portuguese seamen first hove to.

Portuguese royalty and rich monopolists learned to enjoy “*cha*,” as it was called in Macao, before all the other Europeans learned to call it “*tay*” from the Dutch importers, who got the name from Fujian dialect-speaking traders. Dutch ships swarmed into Asian seas after 1600 and in 1610 brought back the first tea sold in Europe. Years later, “As tea begins to come into use by some of the people,” observed the directors of the VOC or Dutch East India Company in 1637, “we expect some jars...with each ship.” This first order for regular tea imports is a matter of historic importance. The West has imported Asian tea uninterrupted since 1637 during the reign of Emperor Chongzhen (1627–1644), the last of the Ming to rule. Drinking the tea of the Ming was commonplace from Southeast Asia to Persia, while Europe was at first receiving tea only in

tiny dribbles, as little as thirty pounds in a six-month period, a luxury to set before William of Orange or a king or two and his noble friends. A century later around 1737, however, tea was to exceed in value all else the Dutch East India Company or the English East India Company would import. The Qing Dynasty had long since replaced the Ming by then, but it was tea as the Ming knew it that the Europeans imported and spread everywhere. As the tea gods had ordained, so it happened that the Ming radicalized tea production and preparation and so loose leaf tea and the teapot were ready and waiting in the homeland of tea to be carried around the world.





茶 “The Warley,” an East India Company tea ship, painted by Robert Salmon in 1801.



茶 Excessive decadence marked the end of the Ming Dynasty, mostly due to all the bullion taken from the Europeans through the tea trade. Traders were forbidden to exchange anything but bullion with foreigners, and were also not permitted to give credit. As a result, the British empire was going bankrupt, losing all the silver that backed its bank notes. Thus began the illegal opium trade, selling opium to the Chinese for bullion, which was then legally traded back to them for tea.

“Spring Morning in a Han Palace,” by Qiu Ying (1494–1552). The artist is drinking tea as he paints. The painting also captures the extravagance of court.

SUPERFLUOUS THINGS

長物誌

茶國際

BY

WEN ZHENHENG

文震亨

文震亨

長物誌
關於茶

Wen Zhenheng (文震亨, 1585–1645) was Wen Zhengming's great-grandson. Like his great-grandfather, he was also a late bloomer, though a great calligrapher and painter. When the Manchurians invaded China, he followed the renegade Ming court into the deep south. In the second year of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), in response to Manchurian law, which decreed that all men wear a queue (a shaved head on the top and long braid in the back), he tried to commit suicide by jumping into a lake. He was rescued by his family. He then went on a hunger strike and passed away after six days of fasting. Other than calligraphy and painting, he wrote many essays on landscaping and gardening. "Superfluous Things" is his most famous book. It is an exploration of everything a good Confucian and Buddhist should know about gardening but is afraid to ask. The first eight chapters discuss the essential elements needed in gardens and interior design, including: 1) architecture, 2) plants, 3) water and rocks, 4) animals, fish and/or aquariums, 5) calligraphy and paintings, 6) furniture, 7) all sorts of small household decorations/utilitarian objects or tools and 8) proper placement of furniture and decorations in interior design—chapter 9 is on clothing, chapter 10 is on vehicles, chapter 11 is on fruits (in relation to gardening), and last but certainly not least, chapter 12 is on incense and tea. The following is a translation of all the parts of "Superfluous Things" that discuss tea.

There is a great study of "Superfluous Things" (Zhangwu Zhi, 長物誌) that was done by Craig Clunas, entitled "Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China" (University of Hawaii Press, 2004).



SECTIONS OF *SUPERFLUOUS THINGS* THAT MENTION TEA

CHAPTER ONE: ON ARCHITECTURE

Tea Hut

A tea hut should be built near a house on a hill and furnished subtly, but beautifully, with teaware. A young servant should be devoted solely to taking care of this hut, in case guests stay for the entire day, or the master decides to stay up late during a cold winter night. This is especially important for hermits or retirees.¹

CHAPTER THREE: WATER AND ROCKS

The Celestial Spring

The Celestial Spring² runs true in autumn, while the rainy season is second best. Autumn rainwater is clear and cool, while the rainwater of the rainy season is sweet. Between the spring and winter seasons, springtime water is superior to winter water. The weather in springtime is milder and thus the rain tastes sweeter. The water from a summer storm is not suitable for tea because such windy thunderstorms are made by dragons and that kind of rainwater may harm human beings.³ Snow is the essence of agricultural crops, hence snow is the best water for brewing tea. However, freshly harvested snow is rich in earthen flavors. It is therefore better to age the snow.⁴ The proper way to harvest rainwater is to stand in the center of a courtyard holding a piece of fabric above a container. Raindrops dripping from the eaves won't result in good water for tea.⁵

Ground & Spring Water

Among ground and spring waters, creamy-looking springs that meander over a large area, such as the springs on Mount Hui,⁶ are the best. The second best springs are those that are clear and cold. Clear spring water is not difficult to come by, but cold springs are rare indeed. Sandy springs tend to be muddy, and rarely run clear nor cold. Some springs smell nice and taste sweet. Spring water with a sweet flavor is more common than water with a fine fragrance. And I have never heard of a spring that smells nice but does not taste sweet. Water from plunging and splashing waterfalls is not drinkable, since it will cause diseases of the head after drinking it over a period of time. For example, the Celestial Terrace and Water Curtain waterfalls on Mount Lu⁷ are not drinkable, though they are a joy to watch and listen to. Sulfuric hot springs are not drinkable either.

Running Water

For running water, it is better to gather water from rivers that are far away from civilization.⁸ The large pond with many rocks near Nanling, filled by the Yangtze River, is a top choice.⁹ Waters that rise from underground caves should sit for some time. One should wait until the unfavorable particles have left the water before drinking.¹⁰



茶 Song Dynasty painting of a sage wandering in search of clear mountain water by Zhao Mengfu in 1299.

Notes

- 1) The second sentence is a direct quote from Gao Lian's (高濂, 1573–1620) *Eight Notes on a Healthy Living* (遵生八箋). Obviously, since he mentions servants, the author's use of the term "hermit" is referring to officials, scholars or artists choosing a simple life in the country, as opposed to renunciates.
- 2) "Celestial spring" is here a poetic way of saying "rain water."
- 3) The ancient Chinese believed that rain was conjured by dragons who lived in the sea, so when there was a drought, the provincial governors would pray to the dragons for rain. Alas, gone are the days when dragons soared free!
- 4) It is unclear whether the author means gathering the snow and leaving it in a jar for some time or harvesting snow that has sat on the ground for some time.
- 5) It is implied here that this is because the roof may not be clean.
- 6) Mt. Hui (惠山) is close to modern day Wuxi City (無錫), Zhejiang Province (浙江).
- 7) The Celestial Terrace (*Tiantai*, 天臺) and Water Curtain (*Shuilian*, 水簾) waterfalls are on Mt. Lu (廬山), which is a UNESCO world heritage site in Jiangxi Province (江西).
- 8) Alas, it seems that the ancients also had some kind of pollution problems, or at least the seeds of our modern problems.
- 9) Nanling (南泠) is modern-day Zhenjiang City (鎮江), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).
- 10) We aren't entirely sure what is meant by this. Many ancient tea lovers used clothes to strain water for tea, removing unwanted particles in that way.

CHAPTER 12: INCENSE AND TEA

Incense and tea are fine in many situations: sitting around and chatting about the Tao with lofty friends,¹¹ tea and incense can soothe the mind and bring cheer to a gathering. Early in the morning, when one has just risen from bed and is not yet prepared to work, tea and incense can refresh the spirit.¹² When one copies ancient calligraphy in the light of a sunny window,¹³ recites poems among the dust of old scrolls or reads a book late at night under lamplight, tea and incense can dispel sleepiness. Dressed in formal clothes, whispering with close friends, tea and incense fan the fires of passion. When one is sitting inside on a rainy day or taking a stroll after dinner, tea and incense ease anxiety and loneliness. Late at night, when one hopes to awaken drunken guests after a feast, to enjoy a nice, long conversation or even howl at the void of night, tea can quench one's thirst and make the party all the merrier. Of all the different kinds of tea and incense I've had before, *Jie* tea¹⁴ and aloeswood incense¹⁵ are the best. There are certain methods of brewing tea that only people of principle and class can learn well.¹⁶

On Quality of Tea

There are several dozen writings on tea; amongst them, Lu Yu's *Tea Sutra*¹⁷ and Cai Xiang's *Record of Tea*¹⁸ are the best. In those days, tea was processed by steaming, grinding and then compressing the leaves into round cakes. There were many famous tea cakes in those days, such as Dragon and Phoenix Cakes, Petite Dragon Cakes, Dense Cloud Dragons and Dragon Flying through Auspicious Clouds Cakes.¹⁹ During Song Huizong's reign,²⁰ people began to consider white tea as superior. Zheng Kewen, a state official in charge of transportation, came up with a new kind of tea called Silver Thread Icy Sprout.²¹ Only the youngest, central bud of this tea was plucked and then soaked in clear spring water. Tea-makers never added any additional fragrance such as borneol to it, compressing this tea into a cake shaped like a baby dragon. They named it the "Dragon that Surpasses Snow Cakes."²² At that time, they thought their tea production methods would last an eternity, but, alas, we brew tea differently now. Our production methods are simpler and more natural, fulfilling the genuine flavor of tea to its fullest potential.²³ In addition, there are specific ways of washing such tea, boiling water and choosing utensils which are brimming with a skill and art that goes well beyond simply listing the "charcoal container," "water vessel," "stove" or "tea container."²⁴

Tiger Hill Tea and Heavenly Pool Tea²⁵

Tea from Tiger Hill is the finest in the world. It is a pity that it is not cultivated in larger amounts. There are only a handful of tea farmers on the mountain and they are under strict government supervision. This tea is so hard to come by that one can only get enough tea leaves for one or two sessions. However, its flavor is actually second to *Jie* tea. Among the teas from Heavenly Pool, those from the Dragon Pool area are the best. Even though teas from South Hill have been famous for a long time, their flavor is far less refined or subtle, tasting a bit like grass.

Jie Tea

Jie tea from Changxing City in Zhejiang Province is superb, highly-regarded and very expensive, while tea from Jingxi is slightly inferior.²⁶ When picking tea, there is no need to pick the youngest buds because they are still emerging and therefore flavorless. Also, it is advised to avoid leaves that are too dark a green, as they are too old and tough. It

is best to pick the leaves with stems that are light green, round and thick. Do not dry them under the sun. It is better to roast them over charcoal and then fan them to room temperature. And tea leaves should be stored in containers lined with bamboo leaves²⁷ and be kept in a high place. Tea is preserved well in warm and dry environments, as it loses its flavor in cool and damp places.

Liu An Tea²⁸

Liu An tea is a medicinal tea. It should not be roasted at a high temperature. When Liu An is roasted at a high temperature, its fragrance does not arise and its flavor turns bitter. However, the inherent essence and quality of Liu An tea is quite fine.

Songluo Tea

Genuine *Songluo*²⁹ tea trees cover less than 20 *mu*³⁰ and are cared for by at most two tea farmers. These tea farmers are very skilled at processing *Songluo* tea. Recently, I met a monk who hand-roasts his tea, which is better than the traditional ones. *Songluo* tea is produced in the foothills of Cave Hill and above the Heavenly Pool.³¹ This is the most popular tea not only in Xi'an, but also in both capitals, Nanjing and Beijing.³² Its popularity has grown because it is easy to brew and it has a fine and strong fragrance.

Longjing and Tianmu Tea³³

Longjing and Tianmu grow later than other teas because the cold season comes earlier in those mountains and it often snows in the winter. Nevertheless, if the leaves are picked and roasted properly, these teas can taste as fine as Heavenly Pool tea.



Notes

11) Wu De often translates this as “drinking tea and talking about what is important.”

12) As Wu De often says, “Being before doing!”

13) One way of learning different ancient calligraphic scripts is to put the model calligraphy against the window when it is sunny so that it is easier to trace the strokes.

14) *Jie* tea (芥茶) refers to a tea from Changxing County (長興), Zhejiang Province (浙江). *Jie* tea was a special species that grew mainly in the Yixing area. “*Jie*” refers to a narrow valley between mountains. *Jie* leaves looked paler than most tea leaves, and the tea liquor appeared milky white. The tea was also said to smell like milk as well. As a result, it was much sought-after and became a tribute tea in the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty. However, this varietal has been extinct for several hundred years. Fortunately, there is a group of people who are trying to revive the cultivation and production of *Jie* tea in recent years.

15) See the November 2016 issue of Global Tea Hut, which was all about aloeswood and tea.

16) Master Lin always says that if you want to learn to make tea well, you must first learn how to be a person. The essence of this is that fine people make fine tea. This is, in part, why a true tea practice must be a practice of self-cultivation.

17) Lu Yu (陸羽, 733–804) wrote his seminal work in the Tang Dynasty (618–907). See the September 2015 Extended Edition of Global Tea Hut.

18) Cai Xiang (蔡襄, 1012–1067) wrote the *Record of Tea* (*Chalu*, 茶錄).

19) The Chinese for these are: Dragon and Phoenix Cakes (龍鳳團), Petite Dragon Cakes (小龍團), Dense Cloud Dragon Cakes (密雲龍) and Dragon Flying through Auspicious Clouds Cakes (瑞雲翔龍).

20) Emperor Song Huizong (宋徽宗, reigned 1101–1124) also wrote an account on tea, the *Treatise on Tea* (*Daguan Chalu*, 大觀茶論), which we translated for the April 2016 issue of Global Tea Hut.

21) Since the central, hairy bud is silver in appearance, they named this tea: “Silver Thread Icy Sprout (銀絲冰芽).”

22) Only when these tiny silver buds were pressed into cakes did they receive the name, “Dragon that Surpasses Snow Cakes (龍團勝雪).”

23) Actually, like the ancestors’ methods he is criticizing, the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) brewing methods would also be outstripped in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), and gongfu tea would more properly brew the kind of tea he is boasting of here.

24) These terms, “charcoal container (*wufu*, 烏府),” “water vessel (*yuntun*, 雲屯),” “brazier/stove (*kujiejun*, 苦節君)” and “tea container (*jianchen*, 建城)” can be found in Gu Yuanqing’s (顧元慶) *Tea Manual* (*Chalu*, 茶錄), which we translated in this issue. Here, the author is suggesting that there is much more to the creation and use of these utensils than merely listing their names in a manual like this one or copying them down from previous masters.

25) Both Tiger Hill (虎丘) and Heavenly Pool (天池) are in modern Suzhou City (蘇州), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

26) Jingxi (荊溪) is modern-day Yixing (宜興), Jiangsu Province (江蘇).

27) This sentence is a direct quote from Zhu Quan’s (朱權, 1378–1448) *Tea Manual* (茶譜), which we have translated in this issue. However, Zhu Quan said to store roasted tea in an envelope with “young (*ruo*, 箚)” leaves while Wen says to store it in

“bamboo (*ruo*, 箚)” leaves—the difference being “young” and “bamboo.” We think Wen’s version makes more sense, but the discrepancy might be a mis-transcription. Since both characters have the same radical for “bamboo (竹)” on top and are pronounced the same, it would be understandable for transcribers to make this mistake.

28) The author literally says “*liuhe* (六合).” In his *Notes on Tea* (茶箋), which we translated in this issue, Wen Long (聞龍) said “There is great tea in Liu An (六安), which is medicinal.” *Liuhe* tea is actually a drink made of minced Liu An tea mixed with ground peanuts, sesame, soybean, ginger and salt, that can be traced back to the twelfth century. We think this is another mis-transcription due to similar characters. “Liu An” makes much more sense here, and was well known to the author. Liu An tea is made in modern-day Liu An County (六安), Anhui Province (安徽). (See the March issue of Global Tea Hut.)

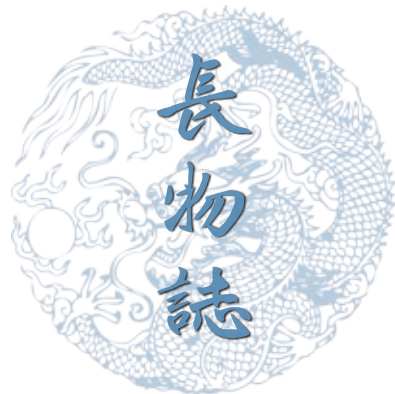
29) *Songluo* tea (松蘿) is still grown on Mount Huang (黃山) in Anhui Province (安徽). It is also a UNESCO world heritage site and where we are heading for our 2017 Annual Global Tea Hut Trip. The Chinese literally means “lichen,” as the area is rather humid.

30) One *mu* is about 667 square meters.

31) Cave Hill (*Dongshan*, 洞山) and Heavenly Pool (*Tianshi*, 天池) are sites on Mt. Huang. There are many “Heavenly Pools” all over China. Virtually any pond on a high mountain could be named “Heavenly Pool.”

32) The first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Ming Taizu (明太祖, 1328–1398) established the capital in Nanjing (南京) in 1368. The third Emperor, Ming Chengzu (明成祖, 1360–1424), who usurped the throne from his own nephew, moved the capital to modern-day Beijing (北京) in 1421. However, some people still referred to both as the capital city.

33) Longjing (龍井), literally “Dragon Well” tea, is still grown near West Lake (西湖), Hangzhou (杭州), Zhejiang Province (浙江), which is a UNESCO world heritage site. Tianmu (天目) literally means “Heavenly Eye.” It is still grown near Mt. Tianmu in Linjiang County (臨江), Zhejiang Province (浙江).



Rinsing the Tea

Bring the water to a boil and then wait a while for it to cool down. Use warm water produced in this fashion to rinse the dust and dirt off of the tea. Let the tea rest in the bowl³⁴ before whisking. If the water has cooled down to room temperature, the fragrance of the tea will develop naturally.³⁵

Boiling Water for Tea

Tea leaves should be roasted over a slow fire, while water for tea needs to be boiled with a “live flame.” This “live flame” is coal with a flaming fire. In the beginning, water starts boiling when the bubbles emerge like fish eyes. This is termed the “first boil.” Then more bubbles appear along the circumference of the kettle, and this is called the “second boil.” Then, the water roars and crashes all around, which is termed the “third boil.” Before water passes through all three boils, while the coals are being kindled and the kettle is starting to heat up and the water is still strong, it is termed “tender young water.” On the other hand, water that has been re-boiled is termed “tough old water,”³⁶ for it has lost its essence. Neither of these kinds of water, young or old, can brew tea to its fullest.

Cleaning the Teaware

Unclean tea utensils and bowls malign the flavor of tea. Therefore, teaware must always be kept clean, dried with a clean cloth and ready for use at any time.³⁷

Tea Washer

A tea washer is made of clay. It looks like a tall bowl, with two tiers and a perforated platform. It is convenient for washing tea leaves on the top because sand and dust all flow down through the holes.

Tea Stove and Water Kettle

Tea stoves and water kettles can be made of several different materials and in many shapes and sizes. Some stoves are made of cast bronze and decorated with a *taotie*,³⁸ while some are plain. Other bronze stoves are cast in the shape of a three-legged cauldron. Tea kettles are best when made of silver, tin is second and copper ones are not usable. Some are tall and shaped like large bamboo. These are easy to maneuver when preparing tea. Even though porcelain ones do not take away from the essence of water, they are not suitable, nor do they look elegant.

Teapot³⁹

The best teapots are made from clay, because clay pots will not disturb a tea's aroma nor the structure of the water. Among Yixing pots, those made by Gong Chun⁴⁰ are the most expensive. However, they do not look fine and most of them are too large. On the other hand, Shi Dabin's⁴¹ pots are too small. It is best if one can find a clean pot that looks like it is an antique and holds about half a liter of water. This is the perfect size for tea. There are many pots that look vulgar

and are not recommended. For example: pots in the shape of pumpkins with big handles over the top of the lids, pots decorated with double peaches or fans, pots in the shape of an octagon with petite floral designs, pots with a saucer on the bottom or pots with white glaze and a blue floral design.⁴² Zhao Liangbi⁴³ makes tin teapots in Shi Dabin's style, and his pots are fine, but they are more suitable for the cold winter season. In recent years, the tin pots made by Gui Fuchu⁴⁴ of Suzhou and Huang Yuanji of the Jiahe⁴⁵ area are the most sought after. However, small tin pots are garish, and gold and silver pots are not stylish nowadays either.

Tea Cups & Bowls

During Emperor Xuanzong's reign,⁴⁶ tea cups with a tall foot were considered superior and elegant. Because these cups are thicker, the tea stays hot for a longer time.⁴⁷ They are as white as jade from the Xinjiang area,⁴⁸ therefore they are great for admiring the color of the liquor. They are still the best among all tea cups. During Emperor Shizong's reign,⁴⁹ there were cups for tea, fruit juice and wine on the imperial sacrificial altar. Therefore, those with the inscription “Gold Charm Ceremonial Altar” on the bottom are great. As for bowls or cups from the White Ding Kiln,⁵⁰ they are collectibles rather than for actual use in tea brewing. Before whisking tea, the bowls should be pre-heated so that a white froth will form. One should be cautioned that antique tea bowls might be damaged by heat. There are also bowls made by Old Man Chui's Kiln,⁵¹ which are rather large and are better used as containers for fruit and nuts. However, it is better to refrain from serving produce that has a strong aroma with tea, such as tangerines, oranges or jasmine. On the other hand, hazelnuts, pine seeds, fresh bamboo shoots, chick peas and lotus seeds are fine.

Choosing Charcoal

When boiling water for tea, smoke is detrimental to the hot water. Therefore, even though things like fallen leaves, bamboo shells, tree twigs and pine cones might sound idyllic, they are in reality of no use at all. Furthermore, charcoal and oily firewood that cracks when burned, making heavy smoke, especially in an enclosed room, is the worst enemy of tea. Charcoal from Changxing tea mountain,⁵² known as “golden charcoal,” is prized for its perfect size. When kindled to a fire, charcoal is the best friend of water for tea brewing.





茶 Right: Original Shi Dabin “Shaman’s Cap” pot from the Ming Dynasty. It’s exciting to think of the time when Yixing-ware met Tea and fell in love!

茶 Left: Ming Dynasty cup with a tall, elegant foot like the author mentions. There are examples in which the foot was broken off by tea lovers.

Notes

34) The author references a “ding (定)” bowl here. During the Song Dynasty, Dingware was made in a kiln that produced ceramics exclusively for imperial usage. Its glaze was light-gray to white in color. However, it was extremely rare and the light color would not have been favored by most tea lovers of the time. Most people used dark bowls to see the white froth more clearly. Perhaps the author is using this term in a different way that we don’t understand.

35) Once again, this author is discussing whisked tea. As you can see, the emperor’s ban on whisked tea took some time to really take hold in the minds, hearts and practice of Chajin.

36) Once could translate this as “stale” water as well.

37) As Wu De often says, “Cha Dao is eighty percent cleaning.” He also admonishes us to never leave tea in our vessels or a tea space unclean. Always leave ample time in a session to clean up; it is a very important part of completing a tea session!

38) *Taotie* are ancient, mythical, ferocious and gluttonous beasts that were a popular motif on bronze vessels, especially before the third century BCE, though they resurface at various times throughout Chinese history. On such a vessel, the beast is tamed and is a protector. This is Daoist and Buddhist philosophy, in which we do not defeat our demons, but rather transcend or tame them—and they often serve us from then on!

39) Now we get to steeped tea. Obviously, the author practiced different brewing methods, whisked and steeped, as we do at the Tea Sage Hut.

40) According to legend, Gong Chun (供春) is the first person to make Yixing pots famous, during the 1520s–60s. He made tea-pots in the shape of tree burls. Later generations called such burl/tree-shaped pots “*gongchun* (供春),” after him. His name literally means “offering for the springtime.” It is said that he learned the craft at the Golden Sand Monastery (金沙寺). He was a manservant, and his master often visited Yixing and rarely needed his services while there, so he would stay at the monastery to learn Buddhism. They say he saw the monks making Yixing pots and asked them to teach him. Like good Zen masters, they said no until he proved he was determined to learn by asking over and over for years, proving he would fulfill the art. Gong Chun then gifted his master one of his pots, who was so impressed by it that he showed it to his aristocratic friends. They all then wanted one, and like that, Gong Chun soon became famous, and Yixing tea-pots along with him.

41) Shi Dabin (時大彬, 1573–1648) is one of the most famous potters in Yixingware. (We plan to start a series covering famous Yixing potters soon, so you will hear more about him in coming

issues.) When he was a young pot-maker, he started to make pots as big as Gong Chun’s. At that time, Gong Chun was in his eighties already. Later on, after a trip to Suzhou, Shi started to make smaller pots and developed his own style. However, these “smaller” pots were not as small as the gongfu pots we are used to, which were invented in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties by Chen Mingyuan (陳鳴遠).

42) Chajin have always preferred simplicity. Such pots are always better for tea. Of course, the art of Yixing has merit as an art in and of itself, but the aesthetic of artistic pots is not always congruent with the measure of a Chajin looking for a pot to make fine tea.

43) Zhao Liangbi (趙良璧) is attributed as the first to make tin pots in Shi Dabin’s style and made tin pots a novelty. Two centuries later, another modification was made by wrapping a layer of “tin jacket” over *zisha* clay pots to enjoy all the great characteristics of Yixing clay and also enjoy the shiny decoration of tin on the outside.

44) Gui Fuchu (歸復出) is said to have been an apprentice of Zhao Liangbi.

45) Huang Yuanji (黃元吉) was also famous for making tin pots in modern-day Jiaxing City (嘉興), Zhejiang Province (浙江).

46) Ming Xuanzong (明宣宗, 1399–1435) reigned from 1425 to 1435.

47) He speaks of cups and bowls interchangeably, expressing the combination of brewing methods.

48) Tremolite jade from Xinjiang looks like coconut oil, with a warm fuzzy luminescence.

49) Ming Shizong (明世宗, 1507–1567) reigned from 1521 to 1567.

50) This kiln is in modern-day Quyang County (曲陽), Hebei Province (河北). Artists there started to make pottery before the ninth century and the quality improved over time. Due to the pieces’ fine, thin bodies and rare light-gray to white color, this city became home to one of the kilns that made ceramics exclusively for imperial usage during the Song Dynasty (960–1279).

51) “Old Man Cui’s kiln (*Cuigong yao*, 崔公窯)” refers to the ceramics made by Cui Guomao (崔國懋) in Jingde Town (景德鎮), Jiangxi Province (江西) from 1522 to 1572.

52) Changxing (長興) is in modern-day Zhejiang Province (浙江), where the famous *Guzhu* (顧渚) and *Jie* (芥茶) teas grow.



A REQUIRED TASTE

TEA CULTURE AMONG 16TH CENTURY LITERARY CIRCLES
AS SEEN THROUGH THE PAINTINGS OF WEN ZHENGMING

茶人: *Michelle Huang*

Some of the authors we are translating in this issue are very well known to Chinese scholars and laymen alike. And even if these specific authors weren't known to a Chinese reader, they at least would have studied enough Chinese history to contextualize these works in the Ming Dynasty: its culture, art and politics. Also, we only got to read parts of Wen's "Superfluous Things," those having to do with tea, so this article on his life and times by our local Chinese art historian, Michelle, who has contributed to many past issues of Global Tea Hut, can help us all to construct a bit of Ming China in our imaginations and thereby enrich our reading of the texts.

Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470–1559) was a famous artist in the late Ming Dynasty in Suzhou, which was a hot spot for literary figures. He came from a family of generations of officials and grew up with another popular literary figure, Tang Yin,¹ who became a high-ranking official when he was 28. Wen had a bumpy journey pursuing officialdom, as he lacked the requisite talent for essay-writing. He made numerous attempts at sitting the official national examinations that were held every three years, and failed nine times! Despite his attempts, Wen failed to obtain an official title for several decades. He eventually obtained a petty title through connections when he was 53, only to resign 3 years later, finding the world of officialdom too hostile. Nevertheless, he was popular among high society and his calligraphy and paintings were very highly sought-after.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, officials often held literary gatherings where they would drink wine, compose poems, and sometimes even paint and write calligraphy together. Although visiting learned friends and drinking wine together had been a common ac-

tivity for literary figures since the dawn of civilization, the booming economy and the increasing availability of public transportation since the 15th century in China made it easier for people to travel longer distances. As a result, high-end restaurants and taverns began to emerge all over China. In addition, many high officials and aristocrats in southern China built gardens stretching hundreds of acres to receive their friends and to avoid having to mingle with the common people. One of the most prestigious gardens in Suzhou, the Humble Administrator's Garden, owned by Wang Xianchen,² was made famous by Wen Zhengming's writing and paintings. Apparently, Wen often stayed at the poshest gardens in Suzhou as their owners' honored guest. Wen was so prudent (and probably even intolerant of alcohol) that he refused to drink more than six cups of wine at any given party. So, he preferred to go to tea-drinking literary gatherings to avoid the pressure to imbibe. In one of his poems, he said "I do not drink wine, but I do get drunk on tea." Partly because he had never held an official title before the age of 53, he had much more free time than

most other gentlemen to work on his art and tea-related research. He wrote a systematic commentary on an existing work, the *Record of Tea* by Cai Xiang (1012–1067),³ which was titled *Commentary on the Record of Dragon Tea Cakes*.⁴

One of Wen Zhengming's works is a hand scroll depicting a trip to Mount Hui, a mountain whose water was renowned as the finest for brewing tea. In the year 1518, when Wen was 49 years old, he traveled to Mount Hui with several officials, including Wang Chong, Wang Shou,⁵ Cai Yu and three others. Wang Chong and Wang Shou were two brothers who often frequented the Humble Administrator's Garden, although they were of no immediate relation to the owner. Like Wen, Wang Chong had not had much luck forging a career as an official, and he also excelled in calligraphy. In fact, Wen Zhengming, Wang Chong and Zhu Yunming⁶ were the three most famous calligraphers in Suzhou during the 15th and 16th centuries. Wen Zhengming and Wang Chong had been planning to take a trip to Mount Hui to taste the famously pure and sweet spring water for years.



惠山茶會圖

Notes

1) Tang Yin (唐寅, 1470–1524) was one of the most popular literary figures in the Ming Dynasty. He passed the local official examination when he was 16 and earned the title of champion (*jiyuan*, 解元) in the Nanjing provincial exam when he was 28. However, his lower-class upbringing and great sense of humor made it difficult for him to excel in high society. So he stopped pursuing officialdom and instead traveled extensively, visiting powerful people and producing many paintings and works of calligraphy. There are many comedic short stories centered around Tang Yin frequenting brothels that poke fun at other officials and moralists.

2) The Humble Administrator's Garden (*Zhuo Zhengyuan*, 拙政園), whose name literally means “the garden of those who are awkward in politics,” is a now a UNESCO world heritage site. The earliest

surviving record of the garden's name was found in Wen's letter to the owner in 1517 thanking him for a lovely summer. The garden lost part of its original site to a museum, so it is now only 560 acres in size.

3) Cai Xiang's (蔡襄, 1012–1067) *Record of Tea* (茶錄) is one of the most important writings on tea from the Song Dynasty.

4) Wen's commentary is called *Longcha Lu Kao* (龍茶錄考) in Chinese.

5) The two brothers were Wang Chong (王寵, 1494–1533) and Wang Shou (王守).

6) Zhu Yunming (祝允明, 1460–1526) was a prodigy who passed the local official examination when he was 17 and the provincial one when he was 32, but he never got into the national level after that. He was famous for his “crazy” running script that would look like incomprehensible scribble to most Chinese.

茶 Above: “Tea Gathering at Mount Hui,” 1518. Wen is reminiscing on one of his favorite trips, tasting the most famous tea with the best spring water from Mount Hui. One can only imagine the pristine Nature, clear, sweet water and gorgeously vibrant tea produced by a world relatively free of pollution. Seeing a depiction of ancient Chajin enjoying teas outdoors inspires us to head out to the mountains and make some tea. It also should inspire us to want to protect the environment and revolutionize how we live and produce commodities so that we too can one day drink from famous rivers, wells and springs!

Even though it was only 60 kilometers (40 miles) from Wen's home in Suzhou to Mt. Hui, it would have taken them weeks just to walk to the foothills surrounding the mountain. They arranged to visit Cai Yu's teacher, who lived near the mountain. The traveling party came prepared with their favorite tea and all the cauldrons, teapots and utensils they would need to savor the best brew of their lives. The hand scroll depicting this expedition begins with an inscription written by Cai Yu about the details of the trip: "On the day of the Qingming Festival, the seven of us stopped at a pavilion with two springs on the hills of Mt. Hui, and poured the spring water into Wang's cauldron. We made the thrice-boiled hot water and enjoyed the tea..."⁷ In the passage, "thrice-boiled" hot water refers to the proper boiling technique, where the water must be boiled until the bubbles roar and splash everywhere. This technique had been described in almost all articles on tea since the *Tea Sutra* by Lu Yu (733–804).

In Chinese hand scrolls, which are in a long horizontal format, there can be writing both before and after the painting section. Hand scrolls are so named because they are usually rolled up and stored away, and when they are occasionally taken out for viewing, they are unrolled and held in the hands to admire them. Hand scrolls are viewed from right to left, similar to the traditional Chinese writing system where the vertical lines of text are also read from right to left. Just as we now scroll up and down on computers, ancient Chinese "scrolled" right and left when they read calligraphy, letters and hand scrolls (flat-bound books appeared after the ninth century). In addition, most hand scrolls were kept in a box after being rolled up. It took time to open the box, take out the hand scroll, untie the silk string and then unroll the scroll itself. As a result, viewing a Chinese hand scroll painting is almost like an art installation in that a temporal element forms part of the viewing experience. A hanging scroll, on the other hand, is vertical and can be hung on the wall for public exhibition. As a rule of thumb, most Chinese hand scroll paintings are private, for personal use, while hanging scrolls are mostly for public viewing, even though they might not be hung all the time.

After Cai's written passage reports the factual information about the whole event, the painting is then revealed to the viewers bit by bit. We first see a big boulder at the very beginning, followed by a dense bamboo forest with several tall pine trees. Among the thick forest, two gentlemen are talking and enjoying nature. Then, two more gentlemen are sitting and chatting around a well, below a hut. To the left of the hut, two servants, mostly obscured by a pine tree, are brewing tea while another gentleman watches. In front of the crouching servant and the low orange table stands a type of portable stove, which was called a "gentleman of principle"⁸ at the time. It has a big teardrop-shaped opening in the front panel for coal and a water kettle on the top. There are several other objects such as water jars, a box (probably full of other smaller utensils) and several tea bowls on the table.

At this point, most modern viewers might be wondering why Wen did not portray all seven gentlemen who were on the trip, nor depict all the utensils needed for brewing tea. It may come as a surprise, then, that the ancient Chinese, especially literary figures, were not given to thinking so literally. In the eleventh century, a controversial but respected poet, essayist, painter and calligrapher, Su Shi,⁹ wrote a manifesto on scholarly painting, claiming that realism in paintings was over-rated, superficial and irrelevant. The only real reason for painting was to convey the painter's personal impression of the subject. In addition, he clarified that since scholars had spent decades maneuvering ink while writing poetry and calligraphy, without any colored pigments, monochrome ink alone was sufficient to convey the essence of their visions.

Shen Kuo, a statesman and contemporary of Su Shi, also made a similar yet much more specific comment. Shen Kuo was a genius—a spectacular Chinese mathematician, astronomer, physicist, meteorologist, civil engineer, hydraulic engineer, art critic, inventor, geologist, zoologist, botanist, archaeologist, pharmacologist, cartographer, agronomist, ethnographer, encyclopedist, general, diplomat, poet and musician.¹⁰ Shen thought that those who painted architecture faithfully, using rulers and accurate perspective, were

artisans but not good painters. He believed that there were three different kinds of perspective in painting. A good painter will internalize the panorama and then transform the entire experience into an overall impression, which he then embodies in a coherent painting. Therefore, those who made structurally correct drawings of architecture to the point that even the mortise system under the roof was depicted faithfully might have excellent fine motor skills, but they could not be classified as good painters. Chinese literary figures who enjoyed painting were clearly conscious that they painted to express their sentiments, emotions and perceptions rather than to record what they saw with their physical eyes.

With this ideology in mind, we can now come back to view this painted hand scroll from the beginning again. The preface written by Cai Yu tells us clearly that this painting is about Wen and his friends' trip to Mt. Hui to enjoy the best spring water in China. This is the only clear piece of information in the hand scroll—the rest of the content can be understood as symbols or suggestions. All elements in the painting signify certain things that happened on their journey. For example, the boulder at the beginning of the painting signifies Mt. Hui, the gentlemen signify the group of seven friends, and the objects on the table signify all the necessary utensils for brewing tea. This is why the rock, trees, hut and people are not painted to scale: perspective was irrelevant in Chinese paintings where the subjects were intended as symbols, not realistic depictions. Not only was the number of gentlemen "incorrect," but all the gentlemen also look so generic that none of them are identifiable as any specific person. Since Cai wrote down the names of all seven men in the traveling party, there was no need to add any individual attributes in the painting. By the same token, Cai specified the purpose of the trip in his writing, so there was no point in displaying all the paraphernalia for tea making on that tiny table. Furthermore, since it takes time to unfold the scroll, the temporal element at the time of viewing lent a visceral quality to the narrative of the painting. At the end of the painting (toward the left end of the scroll),

陸君之田園歌
 吳氏兄弟作此畫者其意入神
 亦嘗以此相和是原于相識
 頗多相似以畫上此類以分滿香
 村其得元氣之味元氣之物則好
 以是為多小者仍多何大者則
 王師建國則如作其和則相和
 故其意是也其則此其和相和
 其和之味則其和相和相和
 吳二
 入地無分入山無分其意與不
 了口其和共中其和共其和
 大其和共中其和共其和
 十其和共中其和共其和
 吳官其和共中其和共其和
 吳三吳氏兄弟作此畫者
 吳氏兄弟作此畫者其意入神
 亦嘗以此相和是原于相識
 頗多相似以畫上此類以分滿香
 村其得元氣之味元氣之物則好
 以是為多小者仍多何大者則
 王師建國則如作其和則相和
 故其意是也其則此其和相和
 其和之味則其和相和相和
 吳二
 入地無分入山無分其意與不
 了口其和共中其和共其和
 大其和共中其和共其和
 十其和共中其和共其和
 吳官其和共中其和共其和
 吳三吳氏兄弟作此畫者



Notes

茶 Above: “Pastoral by Mr. Chen Meigong (陳眉公先生田園歌).” Dates unknown, but judging by the dates of the three people who wrote the inscriptions, it’s from the first half of the 17th century. The second inscription is written by Wen Zhenheng and the first section is written by his cousin, Wen Congjian. The last section is written by Lu Guangming, the grandson of the Mr. Lu (Wen Zhengming’s student) who visited Wen during tea picking time, which Wen immortalized in his painting titled “Tasting Tea.” The painting above is actually a great example of the Ming literati tea circle. The theme of the inscriptions, of Nature and water, is probably referencing another famous literati, Chen Jiru. They are idyllic odes to a “perfect life” in the countryside.

7) Cai Yu (蔡羽, 1470–1541), similarly to Wen Zhengming, also tried repeatedly and only passed the provincial official examination when he was sixty-four, then retired three years later. Wen did not keep company exclusively with late bloomers, however—it was simply an indication of the fierceness of competition. Cai’s inscription reads: “正德十三年二月十九,是日清明,衡山偕九遠,履約,履吉,潘和甫,湯子重及其徒子朋游惠山,舉王氏鼎立二泉亭下,七人者環亭坐,注泉于鼎,三沸而三啜之...”

8) For more detail on the “gentleman of principle,” (*kujiejun*, 苦節君), see the appendix of Gu Yuanqing’s (顧元慶) *Tea Manual* (*Chapu*, 茶譜).

9) Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) was the most influential literary figure in the Song Dynasty (960–1273) because he was highly eloquent and so talented in writing, calligraphy and painting.

10) Shen Kuo (沈剀, 1031–1095) has been lauded by Joseph Needham (1900–1995), a fellow of the Royal Society who specialized in Chinese history of science, as China’s version of Leonardo da Vinci—but five centuries earlier! Here are a tiny fraction

of Shen Kuo’s great achievements: he was the first person in the world to describe the magnetic needle compass, he figured out arithmetic series of second order, theorized that both the sun and moon were spherical, explained the scientific reason behind lunar and solar eclipses, observed that the pole star was in fact a circumpolar star that moves, found out about magnetism on earth, proposed the first solar calendar in China, reported sightings of UFOs, observed and explained the resonance phenomenon, made concave mirrors that could reflect the whole image of a person in a small piece of metal, and more. He was also very practical: he invented and improved many techniques in civil engineering such as surveying for maps and building dams; he also theorized about geomorphology and the shifting geographical climate, helped civilians to drill for and refine petroleum for fuel, developed metallurgy techniques in bronze and steel, and improved movable type printing techniques. Furthermore, he was also a great critic in aesthetics, philosophy, deliberation, history, music, arts and crafts, painting, politics, and so on. He had suffered poor health since childhood, which also led him to study medicine in depth (like many healers who started this way).



茶 “East Garden,” 1527. *East Garden (Dongyuan, 東園) was the estate bestowed by the first Ming emperor on one of his most important generals, Xu Da (徐達, 1332–1385). It is now a municipal garden called “Egret Island Park” boasting well-preserved traditional architecture over 1,523 acres of natural habitat.*

some of the participants wrote a series of poems on points of interest and how they felt about the trip in general. In addition to the original members of the party, some privileged viewers from later generations who lived decades or centuries afterwards could make comments, too. It was like a Medieval Chinese version of Facebook—friends, or friends of friends, could keep commenting on one “post!” Indeed, hand scrolls were like a form of social media for the officials who composed paintings and poems together at literary gatherings. After the parties had finished, the paintings could be shown to other friends who might be invited to continue adding more comments to the scrolls.

Years after the visit to Mt. Hui, Wen Zhengming composed a poem entitled *Brewing Tea*, reminiscing about the trip he took with the Wang brothers a decade prior. “I still remember the taste of spring water in Mt. Hui so dearly in my heart. So whenever I am free, I brew tea myself. Even when it is freezing cold after the snow, I sit on the meditation bench after dark, sipping

tea. These moments remind me of Tao Gu,¹¹ who once brewed tea with snow, out of poverty. I, however, would not mind being ‘tea sick,’ like the famous tea lover Lu Tong.”¹² Even though it was easier to travel in the 16th century than it had been before, traveling must still have been a big event in their lives for these scholars to keep talking about one trip for decades afterward.

As much as Wen enjoyed tea, not many of Wen’s paintings on the subject of tea survived. Years after he went to Mt. Hui, Wen finally obtained a position as a petty official, yet he had to resign only three years later due to constant bullying from younger and higher-ranking officials. About a decade later, when he was 61 years old, he painted a hanging scroll titled *Tasting Tea*. The inscription on the scroll reads: “The deepest forest on the jade-colored mountain is so clean and refreshing that it is devoid of even the most minute speck of dust. All the windows in the house face the beautiful waterfall. Right after the solar term *guyu*,¹³ tea business has good prospects. I just boiled my first cauldron of

water and a friend came to visit me!”¹⁴ Then, he wrote “In the year 1531, tea farmers are busy in the mountains. Lu Shidao came to visit me, so I got some spring water and brewed some tea for us. What a lovely visit!”¹⁵ The painting is minimalistic to the point that it is almost devoid of any specificity. There are two huts under some trees. Two gentlemen are sitting inside of the bigger hut while a servant is brewing tea in the adjacent smaller hut. Again, the servant, who is almost blocked by the tree trunk, is tending the kettle on the stove. The layout of the tea huts is in accordance with Gao Lian’s description in his *Eight Notes on Healthy Living*.¹⁶ Gao said that “the smaller hut for brewing tea should be built right next to the study. Inside the brewing room, there should be one tea stove... The young servant should only take care of this room, in case guests stay for the entire day or the master decides to stay up late during cold winter nights.” In the lower left corner, above the stone bridge, another gentleman is arriving. The style of painting reflects Wen’s personality: plain, without much embellishment, and straight to the point. No wonder Wen loved tea rather than wine: tea is such a cultured, acquired taste, whereas wine is much more imposing, pungent and overwhelming.

Three years later, when Wen was 64, (the same age that a young Paul McCartney sang of wondering if his darling would still love him by then!), he was so content with tea that he composed another painting on tea with a long inscription: *Ten Odes of Tea Utensils* (see cover of this issue). In the passage he tells how, due to an unfortunate ailment, he had to miss the yearly tea tastings at the neighboring tea farms. But then, he was blessed by his great friends who shared three teas of the year with him. He was so exhilarated that he composed his ten poems in response to the existing *Ten Odes of Tea Utensils* by two famous ninth century poets and tea aficionados, Pi Rixiu and Lu Guimeng.¹⁷ The ten tea-related subjects are as follows: shallow valleys for planting tea, tea people,¹⁸ bamboo shoot tea, baskets for picking tea leaves, tea huts, tea stoves, roasting pits, tea cauldrons, tea bowls, and brewing tea. By now, I think viewers may not be too surprised to learn that this painting is virtually

徐達東園

Notes

a direct copy of the one he did three years prior. It is true that Wen's tea hut was not likely to have changed much within three years, and it was certainly not unusual to copy one's own painting. Interestingly, ancient Chinese artists did not have a problem with employing other people's painting styles. The act of "copying" was considered an emulation of the other artist, as well as an exhibition of one's own penmanship. The more styles an artist mastered, and the wider his repertoire, the better an artist he was considered. In ancient China, the concept of plagiarism did not really apply to paintings. Of course, it would have been a huge scandal if one were to plagiarize any serious writing, such as to claim an entire political essay written by someone else as your own, or to hire someone to write your political examination essay for you. As early as the sixth century BCE, Confucius himself, arguably the most influential philosopher, educator, historian and statesman, told his students that he never said anything original—he merely retold what he had read before.¹⁹ For Chinese literary figures, embedding allusions in obscure ways is *the* art in all genres and forms. Again, this concept is very different from the modern concept of copyright—the belief that one must give proper credit to the original creator. It is not unlike the way things operated in Western classical music circles for several centuries (and even now): no one was criticized for performing music written by composers rather than by the player him or herself.²⁰

Two years later, Wen painted his *Hu River Thatch-Roofed Hut* for Shen Tianmin.²¹ In the inscription, Wen compliments Shen for being such a true gentleman. Even though Shen had already moved to the city, he still used the style name "Hu River" to remind himself where he was from. In the passage, Wen gives a short account of the history of Hu River, in which he traces the name back to the first century. He then pays homage to the villa, and to Shen, with a poem. Apparently, Shen was not from a well-respected family and did not hold any titles. So, Wen needed to do a little research about Shen's ancestry in order to compose the poem in a way that honored him. Even though the title of this painting is not directly related to tea per se,

11) Tao Gu (陶穀, 903–970) held different official posts in four different dynasties during his lifetime. Unfortunately, conventional Chinese moral values made him a laughing stock for his lack of integrity. He collected tales and gossip about tea in high society in a volume called *Records of Various Tea Varieties* (*Chuaming Lu*, 荈茗錄).

12) Lu Tong (盧仝, 795–835) indulged in tea so much that he got the nickname "tea addict" or "crazy for tea." He was once so impressed by a tea from Meng Jianyi (孟諫議) that he drank seven bowls of that delicious tea in a row. He then composed a long poem to thank Meng and share his wonderful experience. Later, this *Song of Seven Bowls of Tea* became a favorite allusion for tea lovers.

13) *Guyu* (穀雨) or "Grain Rain" is the solar term after which farmers plant seedlings of various grains, since it is usually followed by the spring rain season. Most tea farmers start to pick tea leaves at this time of the year.

14) In Chinese, the inscription reads: "碧山深處絕纖埃，面面軒窗對水開。穀雨乍過茶事好，鼎湯初沸有朋來。"

15) Lu Shidao (陸師道, 1517–1573) was Wen's student.

16) Gao Lian (高濂, 1573–1620) was from the gentry class and had only been an official for a short time. He studied too hard when he was young and had had eye problems ever since, so he became interested in medicine and healthy living. He also wrote several books on gardening and the leisurely lifestyle of a country esquire. He was also a playwright. His *Eight Notes on Healthy Living* gave advice on eight aspects of life: how to live a peaceful life, optimal routine in different seasons, models for a leisurely daily life, exercises for a healthy life, how to eat a healthy diet, how to live in high society, formulas for herbal medicines, and fairies and immortals.

17) Pi Rixiu (皮日休, 834–883) and Lu Guimeng (陸龜蒙, unknown–881) were

such good friends that they traveled together often. Whenever they were not traveling together, they sent poems back and forth to each other, responding to the previous poem with the same format or meter and rhyme. Lu loved tea so much that he retired early and moved to Guzhu (顧渚) in Zhejiang Province (浙江) so that he could have a tea plantation of his own—this was unusual, as most Chinese moved back to their hometowns after retiring.

18) These "tea people" included all people in the tea business, such as tea farmers, pickers and sellers. Legend has it that one day Pi and Lu went to a tea plantation area during the tea picking season. They went into a store wanting to taste the new tea of the year. The store owner knew they were not locals from their accents and was not sure if they know how expensive the famous Russet Bamboo tea was. The Russet Bamboo tea was a tribute tea which was supposed to be exclusively for imperial enjoyment. But since they looked like literary people, the store owner invited them to compose some poetry about tea if they wanted to. When Pi composed a poem on the spot, the clever store owner asked him to sign the poem. When the owner saw the autograph, he was thrilled—he had hit the jackpot to come across a poet whose work was so highly sought after. To make things even better, Lu also composed another poem. The happy store owner ordered a feast for them to go with the fabulous and rare Russet Bamboo tea, even before the emperor could enjoy it! Those two poems were the ones on "tea people" that Pi and Lu wrote for their *Ten Odes*.

19) Confucius (551–479 BCE), the *Analects* (7:1) "迷而不作。"

20) Since Wen was such a famous painter and calligrapher, the possibility remains that one or both of these versions of his painting may be copies by other artists.

21) Shen Tianmin (沈天民) invited Wen to his mansion as a guest, so Wen painted his *Hu River Thatch-Roofed Hut* (*Huxi Caotang*, 滸溪草堂) as a token of thanks.

we can see the exact same twin huts at the beginning of the painting: a smaller one for brewing tea next to a bigger one where the master would receive his guests. To the left of the main hut, two gentlemen have just disembarked from a boat and are walking toward Shen's villa. This implies that Shen lived beside a lake with his own private dock. There are other houses scattered around the lake with bridges for easy access. In Wen's mind, the best attribute of a grandiose chateau was its simple thatch-roofed hut where unlimited fine tea was served upon request. That is why Wen did not paint a grand estate, even though this scroll was meant to be a flattering painting of Shen's mansion. Instead, Wen chose to paint two simple huts in one quarter of the scroll to exemplify Shen's loftiness and humble nature and elaborate the spectacular, almost fantastical environment in the remaining three-quarters of the painting. In this way, Shen's wealth was alluded to by the stunningly beautiful lake and the impeccable location of his abode. This pattern, with some minor variations, can also be seen in two of Wen's other paintings. *East Garden*²² was painted when Wen was 57 years old, shortly after he quit his petty official post, while *The True Connoisseur's Studio* was painted for his friend Hua Xia,²³ an influential connoisseur and antique collector, when Wen was 87 years old. Even though these three paintings are in hand scroll format, they might well have been hung on the wall for display, especially the one of Shen Tianmin's estate.

Since the illiterate first emperor of the Ming Dynasty issued a decree to abolish sumptuous pressed tea cakes in 1391, loose leaf tea became ever more popular, and the gap between the elite and the common people started to diminish. In the 15th century, with the rise of the merchant class, the ease of long-distance travel and the popularization of mass-produced printed materials, news traveled faster, demand for tea increased and people could easily travel to tea plantations to taste famous teas for themselves. Lu Yu pointed out in his *Classic of Tea* that tea grows naturally in the south. So southern Chinese had already enjoyed the privilege of drinking fine teas for over a millennium. In addition, the fertile land of the south provided local people

with a huge variety of seafood, vegetables and fruits. Hence, it is not surprising that the southern Chinese literati had a long tradition of luxurious and leisurely lifestyles. Among the rich and famous, simply showing off one's wealth was not viewed favorably—so some aristocrats and tycoons would befriend officials and literary figures, in the hope that some of their culture and elegance would “rub off.” Wen's paintings and writings on the subject of tea, whether depicting his travels to Mt. Hui with friends in search of the perfect spring water, drinking tea with his student at his own house, tasting the newest teas of the year while he was ill, or painting tea huts as a gift in return for long stays in splendid villas on vast estates, provide us with a fascinating window into 16th century tea culture in Chinese high society.



Notes

22) *The East Garden* (*Dongyuan*, 東園) was the estate bestowed by the first Ming emperor on one of his most important generals, Xu Da (徐達, 1332–1385). It is now a municipal garden named Egret Island Park, boasting well-preserved traditional architecture in 1,523 acres of natural habitat.

23) Hua Xia (華夏, unknown–1647) specialized in ancient calligraphy and named his studio “The True Connoisseur's Studio” (*Zhenshang Zhai*, 真賞齋).

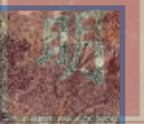


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茶 “True Connoisseur’s Studio,” 1557. Two years before Wen passed away, he painted this handscroll for a famous connoisseur. Again, Wen portrayed the main characters in a simple hut. However, the clues that reveal the identity of the host as the connoisseur who commissioned the work lie in all the artifacts stored in the adjacent room.



茶 A closeup of the middle section of “Hu River Thatch-Roofed Hut,” 1536. This is another idyllic scene for drinking tea and watching the river go by.



茶 The same painting as above, “Hu River Thatched Hut” in its entirety. Wen painted this representation of a villa as a gift for the owner on his visit. For Chinese viewers, a true likeness of the villa was essentially irrelevant since Wen embodied the owner’s loftiness with a seemingly meager tea hut.

品茶

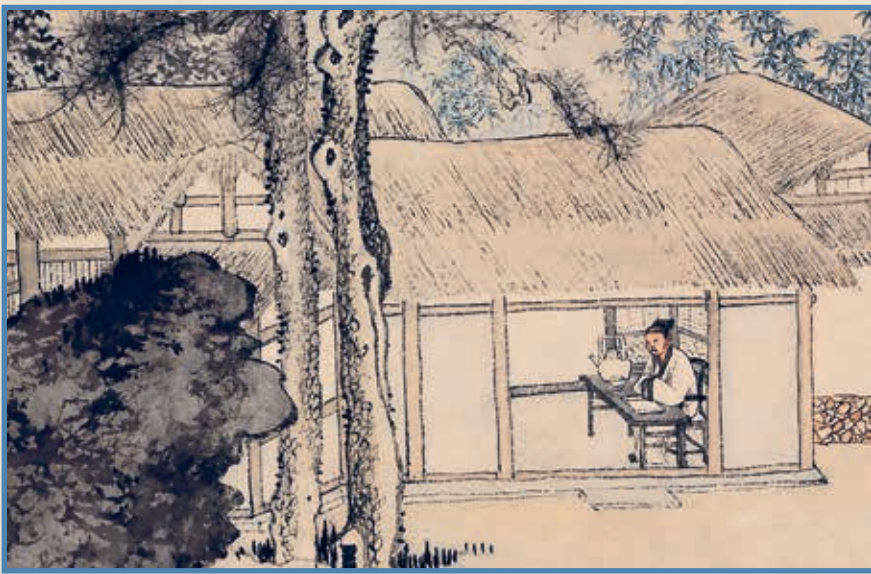
茶 Full painting of "Brewing Tea," a section of which is shown on the cover of this issue. It is by Wen Zhengming. From the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

文徵明





茶 “Sipping Tea” by Tang Yin (唐寅, 1470–1524), also of the Ming Dynasty, from the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum.



唐寅

茶 “Tea Competition” is painted by an unknown artist, probably reproduced from a painting by Liu Song Nian. In the Song Dynasty, it was popular to have tea competitions, especially amongst roadside tea vendors. Apparently, this trend continued into the Ming Dynasty as well.



NOTES ON TEA



BY

聞龍

WEN LONG



聞龍

茶筴



Wen Long (聞龍, 1551–1631) grew up in a family of high officials, but he refused to work for the court and preferred to live a life of leisure in southern China. Even though his “Notes on Tea” is very short, it shows how many literary figures enjoyed tea during the late Ming Dynasty, and how deeply and spiritually it affected them. At that time, the general population could afford to drink tea prepared by street vendors or even in sit-down taverns. But well-to-do gentlemen could afford a lot of effort in the quest for the best tea or water to savor the subdued liquor while chatting about the Eternal Dao. Since Wen could afford to stay home all day comfortably without even trying to win an official title, he claimed autonomy over his life, though he was privileged to do so by his family. This little treatise is a collection of his random thoughts on tea, from production to paraphernalia, to anecdotes. One can almost hear the fragments of quiet conversations over tea echoing in these words about everything in those gentlemen’s lives from tea huts to Nature to the entire Cosmos.



When picking tea, one plucks only the new leaves, not the stems nor the old leaves. In addition, the tips and the bottom parts of the leaves are not to be used because those parts tend to get burned during roasting.

This is how *Songluo* (松蘿) tea is made.

When roasting *Songluo* tea, there should be one person standing on the side to fan the tea and drive off the humidity. I've personally experienced what happens if the humidity is not fanned away while roasting: the finished leaves turn yellow and lose their fragrance. After being roasted in a cauldron (*dang*, 鑪), tea leaves will be transferred onto a large ceramic plate, while the fanning continues at high speed all throughout. After the leaves cool down, they will be kneaded heavily and then scattered into the cauldron again. The second roasting will then be done at a lower temperature. When the leaves are dry, they are ready to be brought to the drying pit (*bei*, 焙). The purpose of kneading the tea is to bring the essence, juices and aromas to the surface, so they are readily available when brewing in the dian tea (*dian cha*, 點茶) fashion. Leaves that have not been roasted nor kneaded and are but sun-dried, are the best. However, I have not had the opportunity to try it before.¹

According to the *Tea Sutra* written by Lu Yu (陸羽), the drying pit is two feet deep, two and a half feet wide and ten feet long, with two-foot-high clay walls above ground. There is a two-tiered, one-foot-high wooden rack built on top of the pit. After the tea is roasted long enough, the half-dried leaves are placed on the lower shelf while the fully-dried tea is moved to the top shelf. Most humbly, I would suggest that we modern people do not really need to follow the structure Master Lu promoted, at least not entirely. I once made a square drying pit not higher than eight *xun*² with sides less than three meters long. I then sealed all four sides, and the top, tight with cotton paper. I put three to four jars to hold the coals within in the pit.³ I then placed new bamboo sieves inside of the fire jars, well above the coals. Before scattering leaves on top of the sieves, a layer of new, pre-washed linen was placed on them. I then closed the door when roasting and kept the leaves uncovered, as the moisture content in the leaves was rather high, especially in the beginning stages of processing. If the jars were covered while roasting, then the leaves would turn yellow. After four to six hours of roasting, when most of the moisture was evaporated, I let the leaves stay in the jars and covered them with a large, shallow bamboo winnowing basket. After the leaves were totally dry, then I took them out of the jars to cool off.⁴ When the leaves cooled to room temperature, I placed them into storage. If the leaves need to be re-roasted later, the same procedure can be employed. Re-roasting tea in the same way will not change its color, fragrance nor aroma much.

Most famous teas are roasted, while Luoqi tea⁵ tastes better steamed. The flavor of this tea is so genuine and fulfilling that people consider it a great treasure. Among the tribute teas,⁶ Guzhu,⁷ Yangxian⁸ and Dongshan teas all emulate Luoqi tea in the way that the leaves are steamed rather than roasted. In fact, steaming is only suitable for *Jie* (芥) tea,⁹ and not suitable for others. Lu Yu says in the *Tea Sutra* that "there are two different ways of processing tea leaves: to steam them or roast them. Since ancient times, people from the Wu area¹⁰ value *Jie* tea. However, it is such a pity that there are usually some yellowish, dark-bamboo-shell-colored impurities in the leaves."¹¹ Before I put any tea into a

storage container, I always ask the timber man for some narrow bamboo shells from the mountains.¹² The shells have to be cleaned and baked dry. I use half of the dry bamboo shells to line the inner surface of the jar. The other half of the shells I chop into small pieces and then mix them with the tea leaves. The mixture of tea leaves and minced bamboo shells can be re-roasted for years to come, remaining as brisk and green as freshly-roasted tea that has just cooled down.¹³

Notes

1) The author is most likely referring to white tea, which the emperor also says is the best, and one of the rarest teas in the *Treatise on Tea*. From a modern perspective, it is easy to wax poetic and wonder if the author is also alluding to wild tea from old trees (perhaps even from Yunnan), simple and unprocessed in order to connect to Nature more simply and clearly.

2) About 2.5 meters.

3) Many Asian countries traditionally used such big wide jars, with a diameter that is longer than the height, to burn coal and heat their houses in cold weather.

4) In this case, there is no need for the two-tiered wooden rack above ground. In addition, since the leaves are inside of the jars, they are closer to the heat, which probably means they takes less time to roast dry.

5) This tea originated from Mt. Luoqi (羅齊山) in Changxing County (長興), Zhejiang Province (浙江).

6) All feudal lords, states, and even neighboring countries and colonies needed to pay tributes to the emperor by presenting the best local produce or novelties annually. While the earliest tribute to the court was in the third century BCE, the system of tribute tea was established in the eighth century, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

7) Guzhu (顧渚) is a town in Changxing County (長興), Zhejiang Province (浙江), famous in tea circles, because this is where Lu Yu (陸羽) wrote his famous *Tea Sutra*.

8) Yangxian tea (陽羨) originated in Yixing County (宜興), Jiangsu Province (江蘇). It is a *Jie* (芥) tea. (See footnote #10.)

9) *Jie* tea is a special varietal that grew mainly in the Yixing area. "Jie" means the narrow valley between mountains. *Jie* leaves look paler than most tea leaves. The liquor looks milky-white, and the tea is said to have the fragrance of fresh milk. As a result, it was much sought after, and eventually became a tribute tea during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). However, *Jie* tea has been extinct for several hundred years. Fortunately, there is a group of people in Jiangsu who have been trying to revive the cultivation and production of *Jie* tea in recent years.

10) Modern-day Jiangsu Province (江蘇) area.

11) This may be referring to larger, older or improperly-processed leaves which are called "huang pian (黃片)" in the modern day.

12) Bamboo sheds its skin as it grows. The relationship between bamboo and tea is ancient, and many kinds of tea, like puerh, Liu Bao and Liu An, are even stored in such bamboo shells. Bamboo shells protect the tea from humidity and absorb the aroma of the tea, re-infusing it with its own smells over time. Many tea lovers, ancient to modern, also suggest that the bamboo shell or leaf's fragrance is beneficial to the tea.

13) As we discussed in the March issue on Liu An tea, that tea is often brewed or boiled together with bamboo leaves. We are going to do some experiments mincing bamboo shells with tea to see what happens. Exciting!

My hometown is surrounded by mountains, so there are plenty of fresh water springs in the neighborhood. However, almost all the springs taste bland, lacking in flavor and aroma. The only exception is the Ta Spring,¹⁴ which flows slowly out of a cave, winding back and forth among the hills and rocks ceaselessly, without ever a dry spell. A Tang Dynasty official, Wang Yuanwei, built an artificial bank on that river to create an additional tributary that flows into the ocean.¹⁵ The Ta River is more than 300 *li*¹⁶ long, from the cave spring to his bank. The sky-blue water is so clear that one can admire the pure white pebbles at the bottom. The spring is cool, brisk, sweet and smooth, and is the best water for brewing tea in the area. Alas, it's a shame I cannot live on a houseboat, ever floating on that river, scooping my retirement brews from the boatside. Whenever I visit that river, I find I can spend weeks there before I even realize how much time has passed. Eating the vibrant food of that place, and sipping tea in such a scenic place is always the highlight of my visit. The closer to the origin of the spring, the better the water is for brewing tea. Due to its remote location, this water has long been missing from most maps, and even modern scholars and maps neglect this stunning place.

It is difficult enough for hermits living in the mountains to carry teaware with them, not to mention those crafted of silver. After lots of tea, one would think that even iron pots end up working as well as silver ones, and silver teaware oxidizes black like iron.¹⁷ After the teaware is cleansed, it is best to simply hang them upside-down on a bamboo rack to dry. If you want to dry them with a towel, only dry the outside of the tea ware, without wiping the inside. Even if the towel is clean, once it is handled by human hands, any odor on the hands will get in the towel and be transferred to the utensils. Furthermore, it is not much of a problem if your utensils are not completely dry.

Uncle Yao of Wuxing once told me that the more times the tea leaves are roasted, the less flavor the tea will have. My experience is in agreement with his. However, if I roast the leaves mixed with minced bamboo shells to an extremely dry state in the first place, and then seal them very tightly in a good storage container, I find they remain dry through even the plum rains.¹⁸ The only way excessive humidity affects such tea is if the storage jar is opened too frequently. In that case, the tea leaves will have to be re-roasted. Consequently, throughout April and August, one should refrain from opening one's tea jar too often. Since the air tends to be dry after September, it is not that bad to open the jar more often at that time. Even so, it is always a good idea to keep one's tea tightly sealed at all times.

The famous eleventh century poet and statesman Su Dongpo¹⁹ said, "Mr. Cai Mo²⁰ enjoyed drinking tea his whole life. However, when he got old, he grew ill with digestive problems and could no longer drink tea, so he continued preparing tea every day for his own cultivation, without drinking the results. That was the joke of the day for many people. Who knew a thousand years later, I'd contract the same ailment as Mr. Cai did." I also wrote a poem: "In my old age, I still indulge in tea even though I cannot handle its cooling effect on the spleen meridian.²¹ Unfortunately, most people are so addicted to tea itself that few can emulate Mr. Cai Mo, who prepared tea only for self-cultivation."²² I remember my old friend Zhou Wenfu (周文甫),

who brewed and drank tea every day religiously. Many Buddhists practice at six fixed times a day, but he drank tea instead: at dawn, lunch time, afternoon, dusk, sunset and dinner time, not to mention serving tea to his guests. He lived to a ripe old age of 85, and passed away peacefully without any illness to speak of. If such peace and prosperity does not come of lifetimes spent cultivating magnitude, as well as pure and good deeds, how could he have enjoyed such a wonderful life? Most people who truly love tea, yet find that they cannot drink tea for one reason or another, would look upon whatsoever teaware they own and see it all as superfluous.²³ Zhou Wenfu once owned a famous Gongchun teapot²⁴ that he treasured immensely. He carried it with him everywhere, caressing it all the time, as if it were the "pearl in his palm."²⁵ After a long period of tea passing through the pot, the outside glowed with a purplish jade hue, while the inside looked like the softest cloudy celadon. What a spectacular pot that was! Zhou cherished that pot so much that he was buried with it, so that he may enjoy it for eternity!

According to the *Tea Sutra*, one should save some of the first boil of tea for later, to pacify the crashing, splashing water and to cultivate the essence of later boils.²⁶ The liquor that is set aside is called "*juanyong* (隽永)" which means "savored forever." If you have five guests, it is better to serve three bowls of tea for them to share. If you have seven guests, then make five bowls and pass them amongst the guests. If you have six guests, then make three bowls as if you are serving five guests, and use the tea saved from the first boil, the *juanyong*, for the sixth guest. In that way, you won't need to worry about the extra bowl of tea.²⁷



STORY OF THE YIXING POT IN CHINESE

東坡雲：蔡君謨嗜茶，老病不能飲，日烹而玩之。可發來者之一笑也。孰知千載之下有同病焉。余嘗有詩雲：年老耽彌甚，脾寒量不勝。去法烹而玩之者，幾希矣。因憶老友周文甫，自少至老，茗碗熏爐，無時楚廢。飲茶日有定期：旦明、晏食、禺中、鋪時、下春、黃昏，凡六舉。而客至烹點，不與焉。壽八十五，無疾而卒。非宿植清福，烏能舉世安享。視好而不能飲者，所得不既多乎。嘗畜一龔春壺，摩挲寶愛，不啻掌珠，用之既久，外類紫玉，內如碧雲，真奇物也。后以殉葬。

14) The Ta River runs near modern-day Ningpo City (寧波), Zhejiang Province (浙江).

15) Wang started the construction of this project in the year 833. He made a dam upstream. During the dry season, the water in the reservoir made irrigation possible in the neighboring areas. On the other hand, the position of the dam forced the river to change its course and split the waterway into two tributaries. Whenever there was a heavy rainstorm, the excess water could then run towards the nearby ocean through the artificial tributary.

16) It is roughly 150km, or 93 miles.

17) Lu Yu and other tea masters of ancient times suggested that silver teaware was best. The author is arguing for simplicity, which is also in the spirit of tea. Ultimately, what is simple depends on the person, place and situation in which a tea is served.

18) In China, the first rainy season usually starts in mid-April and lasts until mid-June, which is also the season for the plum harvest. Therefore, the spring rains were often called the “plum rains.”

19) Su Dongpo (蘇東坡, 1037–1101) was *the* most influential literary figure during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). He was not only well-versed in all literary genres from poetry, prose, *ci* (a new genre developed in the Song Dynasty, which is a very complicated style of poetry, on a grander scale than previous kinds of poetry and with many possible, complex meters in each poem), and *fu* (a revival of an old genre from the third century BCE, which is a rhyming prose), he was also a pioneer in painting, single-handedly creating a brand-new kind of “literati painting.” And, last but not least, he was a master of calligraphy as well. The only drawback to this multi-talented artist and official was his rigid and lofty moral sense of righteousness. Three times too many, he solicited the emperor with critical and straightforward essays that caused his political downfall. Consequently, he found himself exiled for the third time—this time to the end of the world: Hainan Island, the southernmost frontier of China at the time. He ventured into a new territory among the “barbarians,” facing a different culture, language and food. Su’s health deteriorated quickly as a result. A large proportion of his communication with his old friends in the Mainland turned to food and medicinal formulae over the last five years of his life. After years of his friends at court lobbying for his return to civilization, he was finally pardoned and started to head north. However, he was so sick that he did not survive the hardship of the journey and passed away on the way back to the capital. Despite his ill fortune in politics, for more than a thousand years, every generation of Chinese people has admired his integrity and strived to emulate his ingenuity in the arts.

20) Cai Mo (蔡謨, 281–356) lived in a period of political turmoil due to the invasion of the northern nomadic tribes. As a result, the first wave of massive migration in Chinese history, comprised of aristocrats and officials, fled to the deep south to seek a safer environment. In general, there is not much seafood in northern China, so many northerners encountered a huge variety of seafood for the first time in their lives when they crossed the Yellow River to the south. Other than the fact that they both had bumpy political careers, Su identified with Cai because they were both forced to southern China for political reasons, and became ill from the food there. It was recorded in popular prose by northern aristocrats living in the south that Cai once mistook an amphibious crab for a sea crab and ate it. He quickly vomited and had terrible diarrhea afterward. Another fellow northerner teased him that he had neglected one important passage in one of the classics canonized by Confucius, which said that all hard-shelled crawlers with eight legs and two claws are edible. Unfortunately, this incident made Cai famous, or rather infamous, throughout history.

21) (足太阴脾经) According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, the spleen meridian affects digestion and the absorption of food in general as well as the endocrine systems. This doesn’t refer to the organ called a “spleen” in the West, which rests between the stomach and kidneys. Since the tea of the time was all green, it was more cooling and therefore, without the variety of teas we have access to nowadays, many people with cold systems couldn’t enjoy tea.

22) This recalls Master Rikyu’s statement, which Wu De often discusses, that you “imagine your life without tea, and if it is any different, you have yet to understand tea.” Ask Wu De what that means next time you see him. His answer may change your life!

23) The author is implying that most would quit, but not Zhou whose tea spirit was so strong that he continued to serve tea even though he couldn’t drink it. This reminds us of Master Tsai’s story: He also couldn’t drink tea for many years due to digestive issues, but continued to brew it for friends whenever he got the chance. Eventually, he discovered that he could, in fact, drink organic tea and it wouldn’t upset his stomach, so he quit his job and opened a tea house (which only sells organic tea, of course). Even though all tea was obviously organic long ago, as we mentioned, the processing and/or lack of variety in tea may have prevented some people from enjoying tea who may have been able to had they had access to more and different kinds of tea, but that really isn’t the point. The point is that the spirit of tea extends beyond the leaves, water and preparation.

24) It is said that Gong Chun (龔春) was the first famous potter to make purple-sand teapots (*zisha*, 紫砂). He is famous for making pots in the shapes of fantastic tree galls. Later generations have simply come to call them “*gongchun* pots.” The story is that he was a servant of a lord who traveled to Yixing often. While his master was busy with business, he would spend time at the local monastery meditating with the monks. He saw that the monks made teapots by hand and asked them to teach him. Like most Zen teachers, they declined to teach him until some years had passed and he proved himself diligent and determined to practice, at which point they did teach him. According to legend, his pots were so good for tea, and beautiful as well, that his lord showed them to all his friends and Gong Chun then became famous, leaving his master’s service to spend the rest of his life making teapots.

25) The Chinese say “the pearl in one’s palm” the way we say “the apple of one’s eye.” However, the author is punning, suggesting that Zhou literally kept the teapot in his palm, caressing it all the time. Therefore, it seemed fitting to try and stick to the literal Chinese here, even though the phrase loses some of its meaning and power in English.

26) The edition of the *Tea Sutra* we translated for the Extended Edition of September 2015 says the “first boil” instead of the “second boil,” as quoted here. This may be a transcription error.

27) The summation the author gives here is not exactly the same as the edition of Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra* we have in the modern era. In some ways, Wen Long’s version makes more sense. We actually spent *days* pondering Lu Yu’s version when we translated it and had to do some guesswork and use our intuition in the end. Perhaps Wen Long understood Master Lu more deeply than we could (we don’t make much tea in the ways these ancients did) or our command of ancient Chinese is not as good. Whatever the case, this important point once again emphasizes that these translations we are doing in our Classics of Tea series are not meant to be definitive, but rather to encourage more translation, commentary and writing on tea from dynastic times so we can all better understand the history and heritage of our beloved Leaf.



EMPEROR MING TAIZU & THE ABOLITION OF CAKED TEA

茶人: *Steven D. Owyong*

We are very honored this issue to have so many renowned tea scholars brushing scrolls of insight on the Ming Dynasty. Last, but certainly not least, Steven Owyong illuminates the royal decree in all of China's long history that had the greatest impact on tea lovers, then to now. After having read so many tea classics, this article explains why there is such a mixture of tea, teaware and brewing methods in the Ming Dynasty. This fascinating topic, revealed in such a well-researched and articulate form, is one for posterity!

In the autumn of 1391, the dragon throne issued a declaration abolishing the production of caked tea at the imperial estate in Fujian. As recorded in the *Veritable Records of Emperor Taizu of the Great Ming Dynasty*, the *Imperial Decree on the Jianning Annual Offering of Tribute Tea* was proclaimed on the sixteenth day of the ninth lunar month of the twenty-fourth year of the Hongwu era. The palace order began with the simple but severe command: "Obey."

The author of the decree was Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398), who as founder and first emperor of the Ming dynasty acquired the posthumous temple name of Ming Taizu, Great Progenitor of the Ming. Emperor Taizu ruled imperial China from the year 1368 to 1398, a regnal period known as Hongwu, the Era of Great Martial Attainment, in honor of his fame as a warrior and military general. The state tea monopoly played an important role in the economic and legal reforms of Taizu's government and exemplified his efforts to restructure agriculture, trade and taxes while dealing with fraud and corruption. The effectiveness of the emperor's policies was re-

flected in his commands on tea and the extent to which he was obeyed. On occasion, transgressors included his followers and family, their crimes forcing him to choose between the rule of law and nepotism. The emperor's attitude towards tea was stirred by his peasant background and common touch but more often informed by his experience and talent as a civil and military administrator. In private, Taizu's personal taste for tea was possibly influenced by the religious observances of his family.

Born in 1328 among the impoverished Fengyang peasantry of Anhui, Zhu Yuanzhang lost his parents and siblings to hardship, famine and plague, saving himself by honoring his dead father's wish for him to join the local Buddhist monastery of Huangjue Temple where the boy lived as a novice. When the abbey's poverty forced him to leave, he wandered the countryside as a mendicant monk. Returning later to the friary, he learned to read and write until the monastery was destroyed by warfare in 1352. At age twenty-four, he enlisted with Guo Zixing (1312–1355), a Muslim general of insurgent forces rebelling against the Yuan Dynasty and the alien Mon-

gols. Zhu Yuanzhang rose swiftly in the military and in the eyes of Guo Zixing, who proposed the marriage of the young soldier to Lady Ma (1332–1382), Guo's adopted daughter. On the death of Guo Zixing in 1355 and the demise of the general's male heirs, Zhu Yuanzhang became commander in chief of the army and took as his concubine Guo Zixing's other daughter, known as Guo Huifei (active ca. 1355–1370s). The following year, Zhu Yuanzhang captured Nanjing, the major city from which he ruled, and campaigned for over a decade against other warlords for control of the south. Between 1361 and 1364, he took the title of Duke of Wu and then that of Prince of Wu, establishing his aristocratic if not imperial ambitions. In 1367, Suzhou fell under siege, followed by the fall of Fujian on January 21, 1368: within two days Zhu Yuanzhang declared himself emperor and ruler of the Ming Dynasty. The successive surrenders of Suzhou and Fujian brought under his control the empire's two most celebrated tea regions, but it took years for the emperor to issue the stunning decrees that changed the forms of tea as imperial tribute.



Tribute in ancient China was the presentation of goods from the nobility to the sovereign, a system by which the specialties of a province were sent as taxes to the palace. Such levies were first suggested in the *Tribute of Yu* wherein the legendary Yu the Great described the geography of the empire, its mountains and rivers, and the local products that might be sent to the mythical Emperor Shun. As an herb, tea was initially a southern rarity used for its medicinal and culinary properties. Tea was recorded as tribute in the *Records of the Southern Realms beyond Mount Hua* and included in the diplomatic exchanges between the dynastic Zhou and the Ba and Shu of distant Sichuan. Modern archaeology has revealed that tea was received as tribute from at least the second century BCE at capitals in the north and south. In Hunan, excavations at Mawangdui near Changsha unearthed tea from the grave of Xizui (died ca. 168–164 BCE), otherwise known as Lady Dai, the consort of the Chu nobleman Marquis of Dai (died 186 BCE). Kept in a bamboo basket, the tea was labeled and registered in the tomb's funerary inventory. In the north near Xi'an, archaeologists uncovered at the tomb of Emperor Jingdi (188–141 BCE) a sacrificial pit that contained a compressed dark brown vegetal matrix, the remnants of a block of fine tea comprised of uniform leaf buds. From the Han through the Qing dynasties, tea was used as imperial tribute for over two thousand years, most famously during the Northern Song when emperors were presented with highly refined caked teas.

Caked tea was first described by the Tang scholar Lu Yu (733–804) in 780 when he completed the *Tea Sutra*: “By steaming the tea leaves, pounding them to a paste, shaping the paste into molds, drying the cakes, tying them together, and sealing them, tea is thus dried and preserved.” During the Song Dynasty, the processing of caked tea was even more sophisticated, requiring the picking and selection of the smallest buds, frequent washing of leaves, steaming and pressing to express water, juices, and oils, pounding and kneading into a pasty pulp, filling decorative molds, alternately heating and boiling the hardening cakes, drying over a low fire, curing lightly with smoke,

passing over boiling water, and fanning to the luster of dark lacquer. The process took over two weeks before the finished cakes were placed in pouches of yellow silk gauze, wrapped in bamboo leaves and cushioned within linings of more silk, and sealed in a red lacquered casket with a gilt lock. By custom, forty to one hundred measures of the tea were sent north by special courier to the emperor, the precious tribute arriving before the Festival of Purity and Light and the spring sacrifices to the imperial ancestors. When Emperor Taizu declared the abolition of caked tea, he ended a form of tea that had flourished for over six hundred years.

The first elimination of caked tea by Taizu actually occurred in 1375 when he nullified the Yuan imperial tea office at Guzhu and ordered the halt of its caked tea production. Mount Guzhu was a place on the southwestern shores of Lake Tai, near the town of Huzhou in northern Zhejiang. Tea had been produced there since before the third century, and the local leaf was known in history variously as Zisun or Russet Shoot, Yangxian, or Guzhu. In 770, Lu Yu recommended the tea as a superior leaf to the local prefect, and thereafter Guzhu caked tea was sent north as tribute to the capital.

Taizu waited seven years after his inauguration in 1368 to act at Guzhu. In lieu of caked tea, he directed the presentation of two *jin*, about two and a half pounds, of whole-leaf tea as annual tribute to the palace. Just why Taizu ended the production of caked tea at Guzhu was unknown, but tradition had it that he preferred his tea steeped from dried whole leaves. Boiling or steeping whole-leaf tea produced an infusion, a practical and efficient and rather soldierly technique that recalled the medicinal and culinary origins of tea as well as common custom. Steeping whole leaves required only water, fire, a pot and cups—a very direct way of drinking tea that removed the need for the elaborate paraphernalia requisite to the preparation of powdered caked tea: pounder, pestle and mortar, sieve, spoon, ewer, bowl and whisk. In time, Taizu's legendary fondness for Guzhu was connected to the emperor's peasant background and the virtuous frugality inherent in the simple steeping of leaf tea. Within Taizu's family, however, tea drinking may well have

been encouraged by his two wives, Lady Ma and Guo Huifei, both of whom were raised Muslim and taught to eschew alcohol. As noted in the *History of the Ming*, Lady Ma personally prepared Taizu's meals and in all likelihood followed *halal*, the dietary laws of Islam. Among Chinese rulers, Taizu was notable for his support of the Muslim community, the emperor canonizing seven Muslim generals as princes, constructing mosques throughout the south, and writing the *One Hundred Word Eulogy* in praise of the Prophet Mohammad and Islam. According to the lost work *Secret History of Chinese Muslims* by Ma Wensheng (1426–1510), Taizu's commanders were all followers of the Prophet, and Taizu governed his Muslim generals by imposing on them Islamic proscriptions and harsh penalties, especially against alcohol—even personally executing the drunkard son of his closest military aide.

After Guzhu, it was a further sixteen years before Taizu acted in 1391 on the tribute of caked tea from Jianning, Fujian. Fujian was a mountainous province far to the south where the cliffs, rocky soil and good drainage enhanced the quality of its tea. The herb had been grown in Jianning since the Tang Dynasty, but it was in the tenth century that Fujian tea gained aristocratic cachet. In 933, during the Five Dynasties period, the farmer Zhang Tinghui (tenth century) presented his extensive tea gardens at Phoenix Mountain to the King of Min, who then designated the gift as a royal estate and kept Zhang as its overseer. Located along the northern tributaries of the Min River, the tea gardens were known as North Park or Beiyuan. Beiyuan and its tea mills became the primary sources of imperial tribute tea during the Northern Song Dynasty when North Park tea was such the epitome of excellence that certain caked teas became synonymous with the specific reigns of rulers. Indeed, in the history of tea, the possession of North Park and its precious tribute conferred legitimacy to any claim of sovereignty, dynasty, and power over the empire.

Fujian tea was especially appreciated by Emperor Huizong (1082–1135), an aesthete of the highest order who promoted the caked teas of Beiyuan at court. Early in his reign,

Huizong wrote his *Treatise on Tea from the Reign of Great Vision* (1107) in which he buoyantly described the caked tea of Fujian as a reflection of the harmonious condition of the State:

大觀茶論

“As for tea, it possesses the elegance of Ou and Min, endowed with the essence of their hills and streams. Tea dispels and cleanses obstructions and leads to clarity and balance... Since the beginning of the present dynasty, the annual tribute from Jianxi has consisted of dragon rounds and phoenix cakes: the most famous and best tea under Heaven, the products of Heyuan, ever flourishing. Now, we have undertaken the hundred neglected tasks and all within the empire is serene, tranquil, and absent of strife, all achieved favorably without effort. Scholars and commoners alike are immersed in our beneficence and imbued with our transformative virtue, such that all may partake in the noble elegance of drinking tea. Thus in recent years, the merit of picking and selecting tea, the skill of processing it, the excellence of grading it, and the wonder of preparing and serving tea, all have attained the utmost degree of perfection... As for the rise and fall of things, each has its time... But in an era complimented by peace and unchanging normalcy, when all is calm and prosperous, when daily necessities are finally satisfied and when even essentials are just carelessly strewn about, then all scholars under Heaven incline to purity and follow leisurely pursuits, everyone in the quest for tea: seeking its literary gems and pretty sounding bits of golden verse, sipping from its flowers and sucking on its blossoms, weighing the value of its literature, debating the distinctions in its appraisal and judgment. In such a time, even minor scholars unabashedly cherish tea; such may be called the flourishing of sensibility and esteem... I happened to have a day of leisure to dwell upon the subtleties and wonders of tea. For those of later generations who may not know the benefits and demerits of tea, I have at the end of this preface set out twenty articles to be known as the Treatise on Tea.”

“擅甌閩之秀氣，鐘山川之靈稟，祛襟滌滯，致清導和...本朝之興，歲修建溪之貢，尤團鳳餅，名冠天下，而壑源之品，亦自此而盛。延及於今，百廢俱興，海內晏然，垂拱密勿，幸致無為。縉紳之士，韋布之流，沐浴膏澤，熏陶德化，盛以雅尚相推，從事茗飲，故近歲以來，採擇之精，制作之工，品第之勝，烹點之妙，莫不盛造其極。且物之興廢；固自有時...世既累洽，人恬物熙。則常須而日用者，固久厭飫狼籍，而天下之士，勵志清白，兢為閒暇修索之玩，莫不碎玉鏘金，啜英咀華。較筐篋之精，爭鑿裁之別，雖下士於此時，不以蓄茶為羞，可謂盛世之情尚也...偶因暇日，研究精微，所得之妙，後人有不自知為利害者，敘本末列於二十篇，號曰茶論。”

With youthful optimism, Emperor Huizong extolled the virtues of his reign, describing the peace, prosperity, and concord of the empire as manifest in the simple but noble act of drinking tea. For centuries thereafter, the caked teas of North Park remained, in the eyes of emperors, among the most important tribute sent to the imperial capital.

Nearly five hundred years later, Emperor Taizu expressed a less sanguine view of tea when he issued his resounding decree of 1391 to the administrators at North Park:

大明太祖高皇帝實錄 洪武二十四年九月庚子 詔建寧歲貢上供茶

“聽。茶戶採進有司勿與。天下產茶去處歲貢皆有定額，而建寧茶品為上。其所進者必碾而揉之，壓以銀板，大小龍團上以重勞民力。罷造龍團。惟採茶芽以進。其品有四曰探春，屯春，次春，紫筍。置茶戶五百，免其徭役，俾專事採植。既而有司恐其後時常遣人督之。茶戶畏其逼迫，往往納賂。上聞之。故有是命。”

“The officials of the tea households are ordered to cease harvesting and presenting caked tea. Of all the empire’s tea producers of annual tribute on fixed quotas, the tea of Jianning is supreme. To produce tribute tea, leaves must be crushed and kneaded into pulp and pressed into silver molds to make large and small dragon rounds, a method that greatly strains the resources of the people. Abolish the production of dragon rounds. Pick only tea buds to present as tribute. There are four kinds: Seeking Springtime, Gathering Springtime, Staying Spring and Russet Shoots. We established five hundred tea households, exempted them from corvée labor, and allowed them to specialize in planting and harvesting tea. Afterwards, there were officials who feared these later reforms and sent overseers to abuse the householders, who dreaded their tyranny. Everywhere bribes were taken. This was reported to the imperial court; thus, We issue this command.”



茶 These are some replica dragon and phoenix cakes from Zhejiang. They are made from Zisun (Purple Bamboo Shoot Tea). They are organic. However, though the producer claimed they are made just as the cakes of the Tang, Song and early Ming would have been made, cakes from those different dynasties were no doubt different and people nowadays do not have the skills needed to make authentic cakes. They smell delicious, though. We are happily trying them out, boiled and whisked!

洪武

茶 A portrait of an elderly Ming Taizu. The Hongwu emperor lived a long life of seventy years, and seems kindly in this depiction.



In his decree, Taizu was absolute regarding his ban on caked tea, repeating emphatically to stop and eliminate the making of dragon rounds. He regarded the labor-intensive process as a burden to the householders even as he praised them highly for the quality of their tea. Taizu also revealed his grave concern for the farmers whose welfare he pursued through his early reforms, changes that organized them into a stable agricultural corps and excused them and their families from forced labor, permitting all to focus exclusively on cultivating tea. Moreover, by designating just four bud teas, which were far easier to produce than caked teas, the emperor vastly lightened their workload. Then, Taizu finally addressed the true reasons for his decree: the maltreatment of the farmers by government officials who further exploited the peasants by demanding bribes from them.

The corruption surrounding tea during the Ming was once described by the official Cao Hu (1478–1517) in a memorial sent to the throne. In the early sixteenth century, Cao Hu served in Guangxi prefecture, present North-eastern Jiangxi, where he resisted the profiteering of the Grand Defender, the eunuch official sent from the palace to oversee the annual collection of tribute teas from the region. On noting discrepancies in the recording of tribute bud teas, Cao Hu wondered if

the palace actually received the tribute: whereas the amount of tea collected exceeded one thousand *jin*, the tea submitted totaled no more than twenty. In his *Memorial Requesting the Reform of Tribute Tea*, Cao Hu defined in detail the many problems of the imperial tribute system and its levies of tea:

One: The picking and processing of tribute tea happens just at the spring tilling season. Among the peasants, the men must abandon the plow and the women must abandon weaving, leaving them without food or clothing for the entire year.

Two: In early spring, barley and wheat are not ripe. The peasants starve, stomachs in torment. To pick and process tea, their suffering and bitterness are unbearable.

Three: The officials collecting the tea are extremely quibbling; only one in ten passes inspection. The peasants are forced to bear usurious rates, and those who are better off buy good tea to fulfill their quotas.

Four: Without means of meeting the quotas, peasants seeking exemption bribe the officials.

Five: The officials take advantage of the tea trade, coercing and extorting. The entire peasantry is impoverished and production is squandered.

As shown by Cao Hu's memorial-written well over a hundred years after the death of Emperor Taizu—the conditions and corruption affecting tea endured. Imagine the ghost of Taizu evaluating Cao's plea for reform and learning that his decrees of 1375 and 1391 went ignored and his improvements to farm life unfulfilled; moreover, he would have been apoplectic to know that eunuchs—the castrated servants he once decreed be strictly confined to the inner palace—not only moved and exercised extensive powers abroad but also exploited the peasants and engaged in fraud against the very state he founded.

Near the end of his reign, the problems of tea overtook Taizu and dealt him a personal blow, an unexpected treason that affected directly the imperial family and the fate of his daughter. Of the sixteen princesses sired by Taizu, he was closest to the younger of two daughters he fathered with his first wife and empress Lady Ma. Princess Anqing (born ca. 1366), was married in 1381 to Ouyang Lun (died 1397), the wayward son of a scholar. In 1397, Ouyang Lun was sent as an imperial envoy to Sichuan and Shaanxi, a march region strategically linked to the vital tea and horse trade.

Historically, China was dependent on the nomadic cultures of the Asian Steppe for equine mounts, trading iron, cloth and tea for horses,

acquired for civil and military use. In the Ming, a standing herd of an estimated eight hundred thousand head was available with nearly four hundred thousand arrayed in defense at the border. Close to the frontier, Sichuan was the greatest and preferred source of tea; Tibetan herdsmen had been habituated to the herb for centuries and were especially fond of the Sichuan leaf. However, southern Shaanxi and the Hanzhong region also produced tea, and according to the *History of the Ming Dynasty*, a mere three million *jin* of tea from Shaanxi and Hanzhong bought thirty thousand horses. Highly regulated as a monopoly by the Ming government, the exchange of tea for horses was not only important to the security of the state but also a large target for corruption, attracting criminals and the attention of the throne.

In the spring of 1397, Taizu sent a number of envoys, including the high official Jing Qing (died 1402) and the Assistant Censor in Chief Deng Wenkeng (1360–1427), to investigate the smuggling of tea on the Sichuan and Shaanxi border. Shortly thereafter, the imperial son-in-law Ouyang Lun arrived, ostensibly to begin his own inquiries on behalf of the emperor but actually to engage in the highly lucrative but illegal trafficking of tea. Entrusted to do one thing, Ouyang Lun betrayed Taizu to do exactly the opposite. Ouyang employed henchmen led by one Zhou Bao (died 1397) to buy and transport tea, commandeering scores of carts from local officials for the purpose. Intimidated by Ouyang's connections to the imperial family, none dared oppose him until the convoy reached an inspection point at a river crossing where Zhou Bao struck an officer who filed a complaint. On learning of the incident and the identities of those involved, the imperial censor Deng Wenkeng impeached Ouyang Lun in a report that reached the emperor. Taizu was furious. And despite his affection for his daughter, Taizu ordered Ouyang Lun punished by death. Though unrecorded further by history, Princess Anqing was tainted by the scandal and likely never married again.

The abolition of caked tea by Taizu signified many things. Culturally and politically, the imperial dragon and phoenix rounds of Mount Guzhu and

North Park were the last jewels in the imperial crown, and their possession by Taizu was assured by his victories at Suzhou and Fujian. Initially aimed at purging the historic but oppressive Mongol institutions haunting Huzhou and Jianning, Taizu's decrees of 1375 and 1391 also meant to establish his own benevolent reforms on tea in the face of the endemic corruption infecting the industry. The ban belatedly acknowledged that whole-leaf had long been the universal form of tea prepared and served throughout much of the empire and beyond. By the early fourteenth century, numerous commentaries described caked tea and even its powdered form as *passé* and *retardataire*, its use confined to the deep south in Guangdong and Fujian and its dwindling practice as an art continued only among the conservative elite.

Taizu's own son, the tea adept Zhu Quan (1378–1448) eventually admitted in his *Tea Manual* of 1440 that tea “need not be made into paste for cakes” even as he wistfully described all the old accouterments he used in preparing whisked powdered tea. Indeed, the disappearance of caked tea forced the development of alternative arts of tea, skillful techniques and proper utensils newly devised for the steeping of the leaf.

But the greater import of Emperor Taizu's historic decrees may well lie in the often forgotten fact that fine tea, caked or otherwise, was and remains an extremely labor intensive and highly regulated endeavor, a challenging pursuit worthy of the regard and concern expressed so long ago by the Tang poet Lu Tong (775–835) in the *Song of Tea*:

*“Where are the Immortal Isles of Mount Penglai?
I, Master Jade Stream, wish instead to ride this pure wind back
to the tea mountain where other immortals gather to oversee the land,
protecting the pure, high places from wind and rain.
Yet, how can I bear knowing the bitter fate of the myriad peasants toiling
beneath the tumbled tea cliffs!
I have but to ask Grand Master Meng about them;
whether they can ever regain some peace.”*

走筆謝孟諫議寄新茶

— 廬全 —

日高丈五睡正濃，軍將打門驚周公。口云諫議送書信，白絹斜封三道印。開緘宛見諫議面，手閱月團三百片。聞道新年入山裏，蟄蟲驚動春風起。天子須嘗陽羨茶，百草不敢先開花。仁風暗結珠琲瑤，先春抽出黃金芽。摘鮮焙芳旋封裹，至精至好且不奢。至尊之餘合王公，何事便到山人家。柴門反關無俗客，紗帽籠頭自煎吃。碧雲引風吹不斷，白花浮光凝碗面。一碗喉吻潤，兩碗破孤悶。三碗搜枯腸，唯有文字五千卷。四碗發輕汗，平生不平事，盡向毛孔散。五碗肌骨清，六碗通仙靈。七碗吃不得也，唯覺兩腋習習清風生。蓬萊山，在何處。玉川子，乘此清風欲歸去。山上群仙司下土，地位清高隔風雨。安得知百萬億蒼生命，墮在巔崖受辛苦。便為諫議問蒼生，到頭還得蘇息否。

明孝陵



茶 This is the impressive Mausoleum of the Hongwu emperor (明孝陵) in Nanjing. It lies at the southern foot of Purple Mountain. Construction began during the emperor's lifetime, in 1381, and was completed in 1405, during his son's reign. They say that thirteen separate funeral processions left the capital so that grave robbers wouldn't know where the emperor was really buried. Is he actually entombed here? There is a very impressive old stele inside commemorating the emperor, the "Shengong Shengde Stele" (神功圣德碑), literally, "The Stele of Godly Merit and Saintly Virtue," and many officials since have also added memorials as well.

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 Kaelen Ohm.

I don't know how to find the words that will suffice to say how Tea came into my life, how She welcomed me without judgment, held me in Her arms, rocked me as I cried, filled my broken heart with joy, love and forgiveness and then began to speak through me with a calmness and steadiness I had never known. How do I describe the great emptying that occurred within me? How all that I had grown to know and understand about myself evaporated like the ocean into the sky, then poured down with greater understanding, more love, more forgiveness and then evaporated once more?

She came into my life at just the right time, just as I was ready and more than ever in need of a healer and teacher. She came at a time when I *had* the time. She came to me through the right woman, in the right living room on exactly the right day and hour. Steam rose up with a curl of aloeswood smoke as the sun peeked through the window and glimmered through the haze. Cup after cup of a grounded calm washed over me—a sense I had searched for, unsuccessfully, for a very long time. The impatient child within wanted all the answers at once. How could I have *this*? How could I, as quickly as possible, find *this* tea, *this* teaware and drink tea like this every day? I asked my host, trying to contain my sense of urgency: *how*? She gracefully and almost silently handed me a Global Tea Hut card. I wanted to ask, “but where are these cups from? This pot? How about the tea?” I took the card home with me and reflected on the experience I'd just had. A message came: “Go slow. If this is for you, you'll know in time.” And against my habitual and impatient self, I did.

Almost two years later I am here now, with so much gratitude to be connected to you all through this incredible medicine. I know there are so many ways that Her magic affects us all. Whether it's how She unfurls our hearts as She does Her leaves or allows us to be more grateful for the moon or fresh water in which to swim, She is a bearer of beauty and allows us all to be more present to Great Nature and the bounty of gifts our Mother Earth provides.

I'm grateful for the profound silence I've shared with so many brothers and sisters over Tea. As Master Tsai said during my recent journey to Tea Sage Hut, “I speak too much. I must let the Tea speak now.” There is a wild truth to this and it has taught me the power and importance of being present and allowing Tea to speak between souls. Suddenly, the first words you share become something far deeper than a usual first meeting.

In a way Tea has become a place, like a photo book, for beautiful memories in my life. I love to reflect on a wel-



茶人: Kaelen Ohm

coming smile from a host or tears in the eyes of a guest. I love remembering how, after serving tea to my family last summer, my aunt was inspired to move through her Tai Qi form at the edge of the lake, after many months of stagnant practice. Songs have been written and stories told, myself as a vessel for Her to express. Her inspiration is endless and the greatest lesson I have learned is that there is no end nor arrival of any kind. She has humbled me to understand that this practice is a process, as am I and all beings and that to be full is only an opportunity to empty once more and begin again.

I could go on and on. But I will leave in saying thank you to Wu De and the whole family at Global Tea Hut for working so tirelessly to keep the fountain of Tea knowledge flowing for us all. Thank you to all of you for sharing your love for the Leaf on the crazy platform of cyberspace we have. If you ever make your way to Toronto, Canada, my door is wide open and a bowl will be waiting for you.

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As you can see, we have a new printer. We are very excited about this! Soon we will have certification establishing that this magazine is printed exclusively on recycled paper and with soy-based inks!



As you are reading this, we are traveling in Anhui on our Fourth Annual Global Tea Hut Trip, which we will have a whole issue about soon. Raise a bowl for us!



If you are serving tea to large groups on a regular basis and would like some promotional tins of Elevation tea to hand out at your gatherings, please contact us about spreading the Global Tea Hut love!



Wu De will be in New York in June, with many workshops in Brooklyn and a few other locations. Check the website for more details and locations: <http://www.globalteahut.org/wudeteachings>



Don't forget, we are broadcasting live videos at the beginning of every month on our Facebook page. This is a great way to connect with us, learn together and ask any and all questions. Check it out!



Our dear brother and sister, and long-term Global Tea Hut members, Herkko and Triin were married recently. Raise a bowl for them in congratulations and in hopes of abundance!



Along with the color-coded labels, we have also changed the glue on the tea tin labels so that from now on you can peel the label off easily without leaving any white sticky stuff and reuse the tins—to take tea out on a picnic, share some tea love with a friend or store your favorite teas for later.

Center News



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



Our dear brother and Global Tea Hut member Nick Dilks passed away recently. We should all honor this beautiful tea spirit. Say some prayers and leave a bowl out for Nick and his family.



We are still open to having one or two more long-term residents at the Tea Sage Hut. We are especially looking for those with experience in photography/videography. If you have these or other skills to contribute and can work out your own visa situation, please send us an email for more details.



We are going to host a ten-day tea course at the Center on tea and Qi Gong, starting on September twelfth.

April Affirmation

I enjoy learning.

Am I blocking my own learning? Do I listen well? I can choose to learn more. I have the capacity to learn on all levels: body, mind and spirit. I change my body, expand my knowledge and cultivate my spirit towards my potential.



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The most classic 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.

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