# GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE
*March 2017*

## LIU AN TEA
HISTORY & PROCESSING

## JU LUN JU TEAPOTS

## VOICES FROM THE HUT

# Contents

Issue 62 / March 2017

GLOBAL TEA HUT
TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

## GOLDEN THREAD

*For a long time, we have wanted to cover some of the lesser-known genres of black tea. Liu An has one of the most interesting histories of any tea, and its production process is beyond belief. We have translated several in-depth Liu An articles for us all to learn from as we drink this unique, interesting and delicious black tea.*

*Love is changing the world bowl by bowl*

## FEATURES






## TRADITIONS




# From the Editor

In March, the cool weather starts to lift in Taiwan and the tea buds start gathering in their shoots, ready to sprout in April. As we lighten our clothes, our teas follow suit. We start drinking more oolong and young sheng also starts to rear its head again after fermenting through the winter. This window of time is interesting, since the fresh green tea, oolong or sheng puerh for this year aren't available yet, we turn to one- or three-year-old sheng tea. This means that we taste these teas after a year away, starting to get an idea of how they will age over time.

Hopefully, you can all feel this Global Tea Hut gathering momentum. We hope that this year we will get close to our goals of finding land and breaking ground on the world's first permanent free tea school, and maybe by 2018 or 2019 begin to offer courses on various tea-related topics, from tea and meditation to brewing methods, to linear courses on various kinds of tea. We also hope to release the first of four textbooks this year: on bowl tea. It is our aim to provide you with the tools you need to begin serving tea. We hope to create three more textbooks in the future: on gongfu tea, chaxi and finally a guide to hosting tea gatherings of various sizes.

It is our aim to continue to fuel what we hope to be a growing trend of tea education, based on sharing tea and spirit without any financial motivation. We work hard to uphold these principles here at the Hut. You won't find advertisements in these pages, nor gimmicky machines or silly teas we were paid to review, nor advertisements disguised as articles to promote a product, business or merchant. At the Tea Sage Hut, we also do our best to educate guests, and take them to various tea shops we find to be more honest so they can learn other perspectives and purchase the tea and teaware they need. I wouldn't say we are perfect in providing good tea education, but we do our best.

The more such institutions arise, the better educated we all will be. Be it a blog, insightful articles or tea schools, the world needs more unbiased tea wisdom, and from more perspectives than just ours. And that is why we are committed to increasing the authorship in this magazine, allowing you access to more Chinese tea wisdom from more sources. This issue is a testament to that vision. We have created a large budget this year for translations, such as those found in December's issue on Liu Bao or in this amazing issue you're holding, devoted to Liu An black tea. None of us can learn tea holistically without reading from many sources: scholars, historians, farmers, journalists and travelers, as well as those who prepare and enjoy tea.

Our 2017 Annual Global Tea Hut Trip is shaping up to be epic. Somehow, every year is better than the last, even when it seems we've reached the peak. Be sure to fill out an application on our website if you're interested in coming along with us to Anhui and Yixing. In order to apply, you are required to have been a member throughout the entirety of 2016. However, even if you haven't been a member that long, you can still apply and we will put you on a waiting list. A couple of people got in that way last year, and it was so great to have them!

In preparation for this year's trip to Anhui, we wanted to publish an entire issue on Liu An tea, which is a kind of tea most people know little to nothing about. This rare black tea from Anhui was often used as medicine by Chinese herbalists, and back in the day you could find the small five-hundred-gram baskets it comes in throughout China, Taiwan and Hong Kong in any apothecary—and often very old vintages. Master Lin often says that "expensive things aren't always nice, but nice things are always expensive." I've found that to be true, but with exceptions, like most things. There were three great, bargain finds in my tea journey. One of three great treasures I discovered was a basket of 1930s Liu An in a medicine shop for very cheap in the early 2000s. We will actually be drinking that very same tea on our trip this year!

Liu An had a long period from WWII to the 1980s when it wasn't even produced, so finding farmers who can process it in the traditional way is challenging these days. Fortunately, a good friend of ours found one. Additionally, there is a lot of organic agriculture in Anhui these days, which is awesome. (That's one of the reasons we chose it for this year's destination.) I am as excited about this issue as many of you will be, for I also have a lot to learn when it comes to Liu An tea. I was fortunate to drink some well-aged Liu An back in the day, but these articles have taught me a lot I didn't know before. This issue is an exciting chance for us to try a tea rarely seen in the world today and read a lot of information on this tea together, learning all about Liu An history, processing and lore.

## Further Readings

This month, we're going to publish some extra translations on Liu An tea. Of course, we translated more than can possibly fit in this issue, leaving additional information for those looking to delve deeper into Liu An tea.

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

# Tea of the Month

Over the course of this wonderful issue, we are going to be delving into the rich and mysterious world of Liu An black tea. This wonderful tea is little known in the tea world, let alone the West. And since some of us will be heading to Anhui for this year's Global Tea Hut trip, we thought we'd publish an issue on one of the magical teas from that province. There is a lot of interesting history and lore surrounding this tea, but our discussion will begin, of course, with the processing, which is unlike that of any other tea. And no in-depth discussion of Liu An tea would be complete without some of this golden black tea to sip as we talk, so put on the kettle and let's pour some cups of this month's tea, diving right in to the little bamboo basket of Liu An.

During the early years of the Republic, Liu An basket tea had an established place at the tea tables of Chinese people. However, due to the period of war and unrest that followed, and the changing tides of history, Liu An tea was almost unheard of for many years—it very nearly vanished altogether. The process of making Liu An basket tea is complex and time-consuming; from picking the fresh leaves right through to packing the final product in baskets, the whole process takes more than half a year. The beginning and end of the processing cycle are marked by two particular solar terms, which are units of time Chinese farmers traditionally used to measure the seasons. The picking season begins around *Guyu* (穀雨) or "Grain Rain," the sixth solar term, which runs from April 20th to May 4th. Toward the end of the cycle, the refining process happens during *Bailu* (白露) or "White Dew," the fifteenth solar term, which spans September 8th to September 22nd.

In addition to the long processing time, finished Liu An tea also traditionally had to be stored in a warehouse for at least three years before it could be sold. The costs associated with the lengthy manufacturing and storage process made it difficult to produce during wartime. This became a major factor in Liu An's scarcity during WWII. After lying low for many years, it wasn't until the 1980s that Liu An tea once again became available to the general population, thanks to the united will of the many Chajin who loved it.

In order to take a detailed look into the art of Liu An tea processing after its revival, our reporters visited Anhui province's Luxi village in both spring and fall and took detailed notes on the Liu An basket tea manufacturing process. Through this in-depth report, we hope to offer you, our reader, a better understanding of the complex and meticulous process which brings us this elegant, fragrant aged tea with its unique and enduring charm.

These days, Liu An manufacturing involves a number of steps, which make up two phases. The initial processing phase happens around *Guyu*, in late April to early May. This phase includes picking, spreading out, kill-green, rolling, first drying, heaping, second drying, sifting, winnowing, picking out debris and blending. This is followed by the refining phase, which happens around *Bailu*, in mid-September. The refining process involves firing, "exposing," steaming to soften the leaves, packing into baskets, frame-baking and packaging. In the following pages, we'll take a detailed look at each of the steps in Liu An production. It is a very unique tea, as it is made from the raw material of Mao Feng green tea, but processed in a way similar to black tea.

Golden Thread

Qimen, Anhui, China

2016 Liu An Black Tea

Han Chinese

~1500 Meters

# 黑茶

# Initial Processing (around *Guyu*, April 20th–May 4th)

### *Picking (cai zhai, 採摘)*

When picking tea leaves to make Liu An tea, it's important to choose the right season so that the leaves and shoots have reached just the right level of maturity. Liu An is made from the leaves of the *Zhuye* variety of tea plant, from Qimen in Anhui Province. To make Liu An tea, one must use "*Guyu* tea"—tea that is harvested from the week preceding *Guyu* until approximately May 5th, the beginning of the seventh solar term, *Lixia* (立夏, or the "Start of Summer"). Unlike puerh, Liu An tea is picked with one bud and either one or two leaves, which contributes to the elegance of its flavor.

### *Withering (tan jing, 攤青)*

This step is also called "sun-baking." It involves spreading the freshly picked leaves and buds out flat and allowing some of the moisture in the leaves to evaporate. The leaves are left dark green and soft, ready for the next step in the process.

### *Kill-green (sha qing, 殺青)*

This step involves stir-frying the leaves in a large iron wok, to evaporate most of the water in the leaves and to control the degree of withering. These days, there are two different methods of carrying out the kill-green step: pan-firing and barrel-rolling. Pan-firing allows the steam to escape as the leaves cook, which results in a tea liquor that is smooth and pleasant on the throat. With barrel-rolling, on the other hand, the steam is trapped inside the barrel and can't dissipate, which creates a sort of humid, stifled flavor that influences the quality of the tea. Therefore, although it takes more time and effort, pan-firing results in a much finer quality of Liu An tea.

### *Rolling (rou nian, 揉捻)*

At present, Liu An tea is rolled either by hand or machine. They are the same in principle: rolling the leaves while they're still hot from the firing, until they are shaped into long stripes. For the best final flavor, one must carefully regulate the rolling time to control the degree of oxidation. It's also important to control the degree of pressure to preserve the clarity of the tea liquor—press too hard and the leaves will be crushed and produce a cloudy liquor when brewed.

### *Drying (gan zao, 乾躁)*

After the leaves are rolled into stripes, they are then baked on a wood stove until dry. This step completes the initial phase of processing. The resulting *maocha*, or unfinished tea, is packed into bags and stored in a shady, well-ventilated place until *Liqiu* (立秋, "Start of Autumn"), the 13th solar term, which runs from August 7th to 22nd. By this point, the tea is almost ready to enter the refining phase.

### *Sifting (shai fen, 篩分)*

The *maocha* must then be baked once more to soften it, before being sifted into different grades using a tea sieve.

### *Winnowing (feng xuan, 風選)*

The goal of this step is to separate and remove any yellow leaves (*huang pian*, 黃片), which are leaves that are too large to make nice tea (they often turn yellow), tea stalks and/or other debris.

### *Blending (pin pei, 拼配)*

Once the different grades of tea are separated by sifting, they must be appropriately sorted and stacked into piles.

茶 *Some fresh buds of Liu An black tea. Our Tea of the Month was completely hand-picked, which requires a tremendous amount of effort.*

# Red vs. Black Tea

Once again, we are committed to correcting the red tea/black tea mistake. It is important to understand that what most Westerners call "black tea" is actually "red tea." Ordinarily, it doesn't matter what something is called, but in this case, there is another kind of Chinese tea that is called "black tea." So if you call red tea "black tea," what then do you call black tea?

The reasons for this mistake are manifold, primarily having to do with the long distances the tea traveled in chests to Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information during the first few hundred years tea was traded. Another layer of confusion comes from the fact that the Chinese have always categorized tea based on the liquor, while Westerners named tea for the color of the leaf itself. The difference between black and red tea is much more obvious in the liquor than in the leaf, though the leaf is also slightly red to our eyes. Europeans weren't allowed inland in those days, and never saw the tea trees or the processing (except some roasting). Buying through middlemen in broken pidgin English, you could see how easy it would be to spread misinformation. We repeat this explanation every time we send a red or black tea, because it is an important mistake that we tea lovers need to correct in the world, so that the real black tea can have its name back!

The basic difference between red and black tea is that red tea is heavily oxidized through prolonged withering and rolling during production, while black tea is artificially fermented post-production. This usually happens through piling, which is akin to composting. Local bacteria are important in the post-production artificial fermentation of black tea, which means that it is a very regional kind of tea—its terroir includes the micro-environment, along with the trees, soil, weather, etc. On the other hand, red tea is the only genre of tea that is truly a production methodology, which can therefore be applied to *any* varietal/cultivar.

Nowadays, the term "dark tea" is used by some tea vendors and authors to describe black tea, rather than correcting the mistake. However, we still feel that when a culture misappropriates or uses a mistaken term for a concept, category or idea from another culture, then it is the foreign culture's responsibility to correct the mistake, to demonstrate a respect and honor for the "host." Honoring the proper Chinese terminology is honoring the farmers and tea masters who have handed the genetic lineage of trees, the brewing methodologies and the spiritual practices down to us. We are not trying to correct the mainstream habit of saying "black tea." What we are doing is correcting this mistake amongst those who care—amongst our community of more conscious, heart-centered Chajin, allowing all of you to better communicate with those who produce and sell tea at its source.

The issue is, ultimately, a minor one, but here's an example of the potential effect of honoring tradition and correcting this mistake: Last month, we met with two farmers from Liu Bao, in Guangxi. They were so happy with our efforts to honor and respect true "black tea," returning it to its proper place in the West, that they broke out a celebratory fifty-year-old Liu Bao tea and congratulated us again and again, cup after cup! And their gratitude was truly sincere, as was our respect for black tea producers.

# 紅茶和紅茶

# Refining (around *Bailu*, "White Dew," September 8th–22nd)

### *High-temperature firing (gao huo, 高火)*

The Liu An processing method requires the tea leaves be left outside for a night directly after firing, so the tea makers choose a time when the weather is clear around the *Bailu* solar term, in mid-September. This way the sequence of firing, leaving the tea out overnight, steaming to soften the leaves and then packing the tea into baskets can all be done in quick succession. Altogether, this part of the process takes around two days and one night.

The high-temperature firing is usually done using a bamboo frame, with the heat of the flames making the leaves dry and fragrant. It takes a lot of experience to be able to identify the ideal firing conditions for the tea: if the heat is too low, the tea won't achieve the desired fragrance, whereas if it's too high, the tea will take on a burnt flavor. So this step is a true test of the tea maker's skill.

### *"Exposing" the tea (lu cha, 露茶)*

Once the tea leaves have been fired until they're dry and fragrant, they are laid outdoors in layers about ten centimeters thick to slowly absorb the moisture of the "white dew" night, and reduce the internal heat produced during firing. The tea makers rely on the sweet, heaven-sent nighttime dew to create the graceful, exquisite flavor that is unique to Liu An basket tea. This is the post-production fermentation phase that technically makes Liu An a black tea.

### *Steaming (zheng ruan, 蒸軟)*

After the tea leaves are left out to absorb the dew, they are placed in woven bamboo steamers. They are steamed for three to five minutes, until the leaves are soft and ready to be shaped in the bamboo baskets.

### *Packing into baskets (zhuang lou, 裝簍)*

One could say that these hand-woven bamboo baskets act as cradles for Liu An basket tea—they shelter the new tea from birth right through its journey of oxidation. To make the baskets, elderly men chop the bamboo and split it into thin strips, and elderly women deftly weave the strips together with practiced skill. Even now, the production of baskets for Liu An tea packaging relies on these traditional crafts that have been passed down through the generations. The small bamboo baskets are lined with bamboo leaves, and the softened tea leaves are tightly packed in to give them their final shape. Once they're packed in, the heat remaining in the tea leaves causes the fragrances of the tea, the bamboo leaves and the bamboo basket to mingle together, and the tea continues to oxidize over time.

### *"Frame-baking" (jia hong, 架烘)*

Once the Liu An tea is packed into the baskets, the baskets are grouped into pairs, and three pairs are put together to make a row. The rows of tea must undergo one final drying step: baking on a bamboo frame. The rows of baskets are placed into a drying kiln with hot coals at the bottom. A cotton quilt is laid over the top to absorb the steam and keep in the heat. The tea is baked until the quilt is no longer damp to the touch. This process takes about two days.

### *Packaging (da wei, 打圍)*

The rows of Liu An tea baskets are tied together in groups of six, bound up tightly and solidly with leaf-lined bamboo strips, and placed in cool, dry, shady and well-ventilated storehouses. Liu An tea is an oxidized black tea, so aged tea is valued much more highly than new tea; traditionally, Liu An would be stored for at least three years before it was considered ready for sale.

萬簍之甘露覆蓋古林中

茶 *It takes thousands of buds to make a kilogram of Liu An tea. The tea is harvested and then withered, like most kinds of tea.*

茶 ***Bottom Left:*** *The dried tea is being winnowed to separate unwanted stems, yellow leaves and bits.*

茶 ***Bottom Right:*** *This is the "high-temperature firing," which is done in September when the weather is perfect.*

茶 *Once the tea leaves have been dried, they go through a processing stage unique to Liu An tea. The tea is laid out overnight in piles that are around ten centimeters thick. In the early morning, they absorb the pale "white dew," which lends this tea its exquisite flavor, aroma and very special energy. What could be more magical than that? Afterwards, the tea is brought indoors and piled for a short time before the packaging and final drying shown below.*

茶 *This is the "frame-baking," which is actually the final drying phase. The baskets are hand-woven from bamboo rattan, and then filled with bamboo leaves that are hand-stitched together. Afterwards, the baskets are sown together into rows and put into a large kiln with warm coals glowing underneath. A giant quilt is laid over the top of the kiln and the baskets are dried one last time to make sure that no moisture is left in the tea, which can now age perfectly.*

# Golden Thread

This month's tea is not just unique as a black tea, it is amongst the most amazing of all the extraordinary teas we have ever sent out in Global Tea Hut! Recently, we shared some "Heavenly Basket" black tea from Hunan with our guests and asked them what kind of tea they thought it was. Most guessed oolong. This month's tea would probably have elicited similar answers—it tastes roasted, sweet and the liquor looks golden. Most of us are used to the dark, thick and rich liquor of an aged Liu Bao when we think of black tea. But many black tea producers are making lighter teas these days, as the cost to warehouse teas like this month's for three years is too high. And consumers often want to age the tea themselves anyway. It is hard to say if Golden Thread really qualifies as a black tea. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that it is a green tea processed using some *similar* processing methods as black tea.

Liu An tea is made from the same raw material as Mao Feng green tea. Traditionally, the first flush would be used for green tea and the second flush for Liu An. The trees this tea comes from are all forty to seventy years old. Also, all the teas on this farm are seed-propagated, which is extremely rare these days, especially for China. The leaves are used to produce green tea, red tea and Liu An tea. Golden Thread was processed by hand, which also makes it a very special tea for this age. There is truly nothing like it in the world!

There is a great magic in knowing that this amazing tea took almost a year to make, and that it was left outside on the fullest moon of the year (the Harvest Moon) and allowed to ferment in the "white dew." While the tea has mellowed since September, it could really use a couple more years of aging to deepen the seal. When we drink this tea, we can feel the moon in each sip. The softness of the dew brings a sweetness that fills the mouth and coats the throat.

Golden Thread is bright and leads you to the poetic, in William Blake's sense of the term: *an invitation to adventure*. This tea is magic; it's made with fairy dew, after all! There is no other way to describe the experience. When you sit with this tea for an hour or two, the day changes—it glows and the threads lead you beyond your ordinary experience. There aren't any teas that stand as a point of comparison for this one. It is delicate, yet thrumming, sweet with hints of astringency and roast, and very Yin, pronouncedly so. There is a lot of mystery in its flavor, aroma and the way it makes you feel. We have never tried a tea like this before!

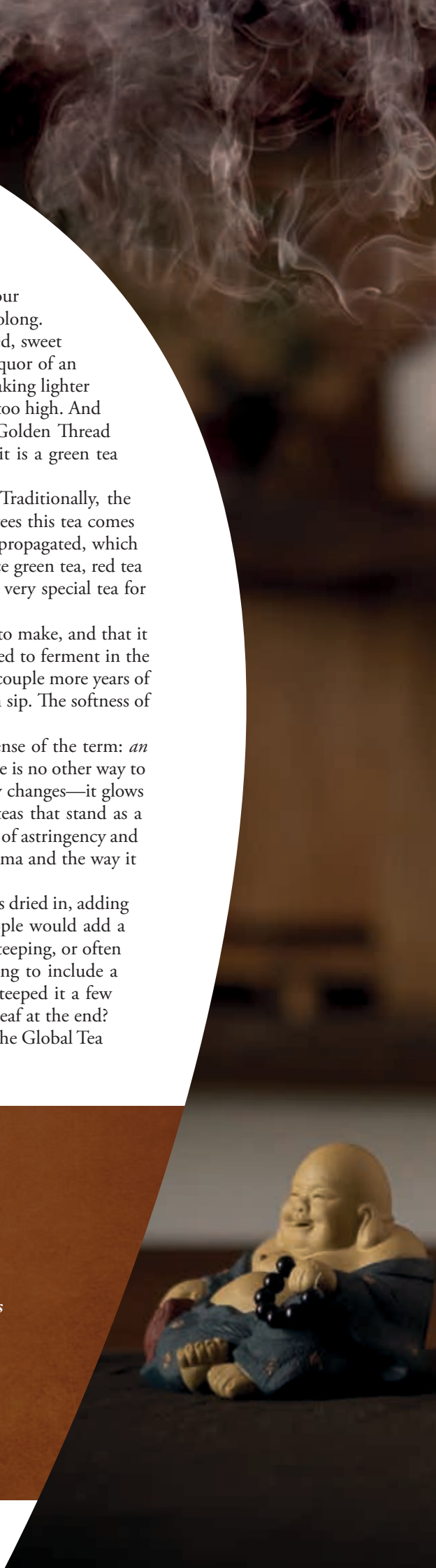
When you drink Golden Thread, you can also taste the bamboo basket it was dried in, adding to the leaves and dew in a rich bouquet of flavors. Traditionally, Chinese people would add a piece of the bamboo leaves used to wrap Liu An tea into the liquor they were steeping, or often boiling, usually near the end so they could taste the tea first. We are also going to include a bamboo leaf in each and every tin. You can add it to the tea after you have steeped it a few times, so you can taste the tea by itself first. What happens when you add the leaf at the end? Does it change the flavor? The energy? Let us know on the discussion board of the Global Tea Hut website!

*Gongfu Tea*

*Sidehandle brewing*

***Water:*** *spring water, gathered or bottled*
***Fire:*** *coals, infrared or gas*
***Heat:*** *hot, fish-eye, just before a full boil*
***Brewing Methods:*** *gongfu or sidehandle*
***Steeping:*** *few seconds, flash, flash, then increasing in duration each time*
**add the bamboo leaf later on in the session*
***Patience:*** *15–25 steepings*

***茶 Black tea requires lots of heat. Make sure you shower the pot before and after steeping, with a thorough shower afterwards.***



# Brewing Tips

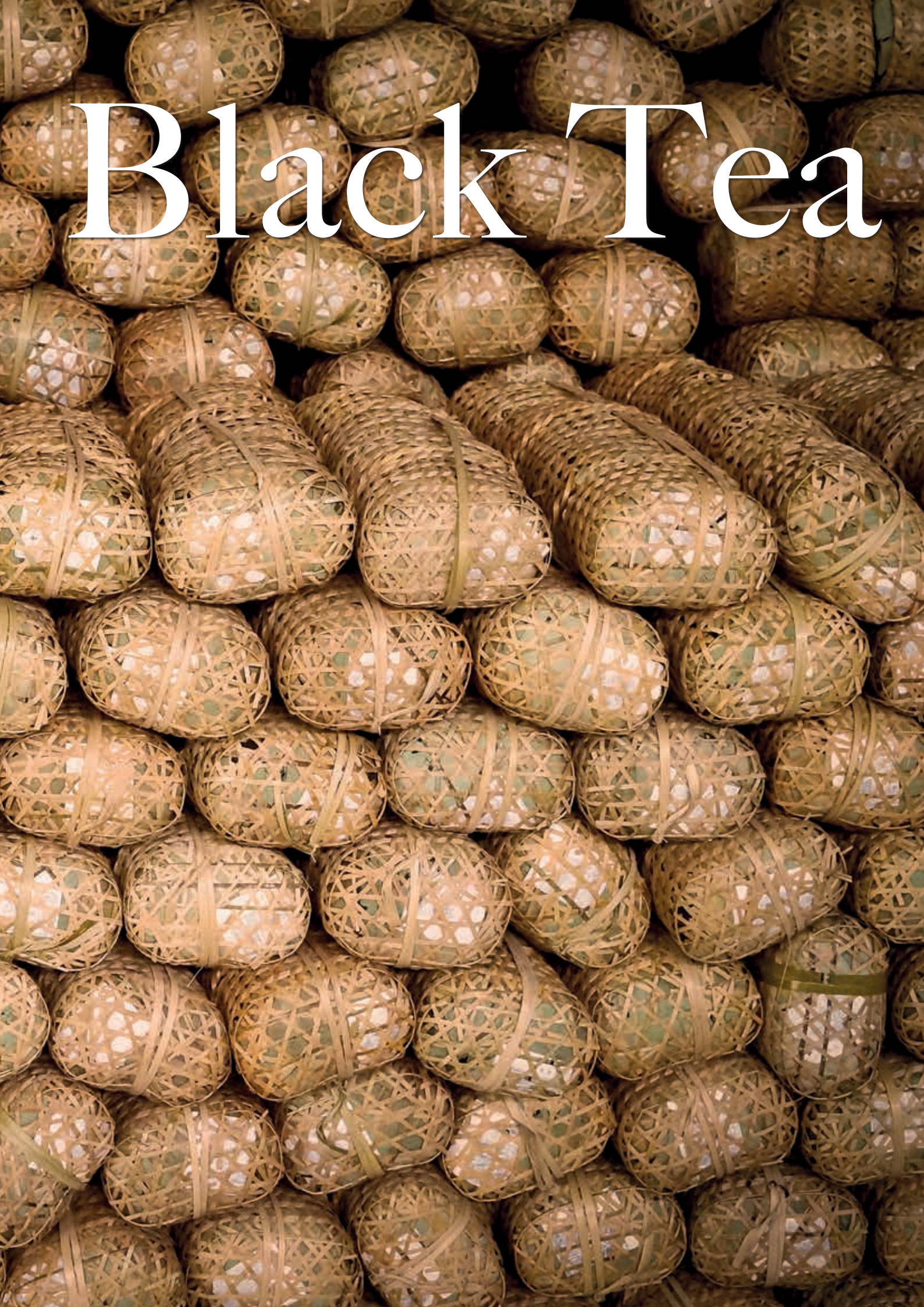
*This month's tea should ideally be brewed gongfu, so let's break out our cups and pots and steep this one together. If you don't have gongfu teaware, or don't feel ready to brew tea that way, then you can also steep this tea in a sidehandle pot. If you absolutely have to, you could drink this month's tea in a bowl, but that is less than ideal. This is a tea that longs to be steeped in a pot.*

*Use some spring water and charcoal, if available. The deeper the heat, the better for a tea like this. And since heat is always so important with a black tea, practice showering the pot both before and after steeping. A good tip is to make sure that you stay off the lid during the pre-shower, rotating in a ring around the upper part of the pot's body. If you shower the lid in the initial shower, it will often be too hot to pick up in order to steep the tea. Then, in the after-shower, you can thoroughly cover the lid. Also, make the after-shower as thorough as you can, completely drenching the pot in steaming hot water. This will increase the depth, smoothness and flavor of your tea, and will increase the patience of the session, which means you will get many more steepings.*

*Sometimes people ask if it is a waste of water to shower the pot so often, since this brewing method goes through much more water than so-called "dry brewing," in which you don't ever shower the pot. But water is the "Mother of Tea," and is there to serve the finest cup of tea possible. It is never a waste to enhance the tea. The water is here to serve the tea, in other words—much like we are. Anything that makes a finer cup is worthwhile. It isn't a waste of water to shower any more than it is a waste of charcoal to heat the kettle, because all of the elements are here to produce the best cup of tea possible, and therefore fulfill themselves in achieving that end; it is their Dao.*


Liu An
六安黑茶
每篮充满白露宝藏

# Black Tea



# Luxi Village
## The Home of Liu An Tea

蘆溪古村落的六安茶

茶人: *Luo Yingyin (羅英銀)*

*Luxi Village was once a fortified town situated on the waterways of Qimen County, Anhui Province. Look around anywhere in Luxi and you can find traces of history that paint a picture of what the landscape must have been like in days gone by. As the passing time brought roads and railways to replace the waterways as main transport routes, Luxi lost its importance as a trading hub, and went through a period of relative obscurity. Now, after the re-emergence of Liu An tea, we paid a visit to the traditional tea region of Luxi. This gave us a wonderful opportunity to once again catch a glimpse of the local history and tea culture, and bear witness to its importance.*

The road to Luxi Village from Qimen County is around thirty kilometers long, and snakes alongside the Changjiang River. As one follows the riverbank, the landscape is punctuated by groves of old camphor and maple trees, lending a sense of depth to the scenery. Every now and then, the reflection of a green hillside on the opposite bank traces an elegant arc on the water. As the car rounds each bend, a brand new scene presents itself; each new landscape unfurls like a never-ending series of painted scrolls, or scenes of a film flickering across a projector screen.

## A Village Rich in History

Luxi Village is situated in the southeast of Qimen County. The village is more than one thousand years old, so you can see ancient houses, old groves of trees and ancestral temples everywhere you look. So how is it that such a small village has such a long history? The answer lies in its geography. The village is situated at the meeting point of five large rivers: the Changjiang, Lishui, Qiling, Chawan and Luocun rivers. It's the lowest-lying point in the area, and the rivers all converge to form the widest body of water in Qimen County, giving rise to the famous landscape that's traditionally been described as "eighteen bends leading to the lake." The single river that flows on from this point is called the Changjiang. After the river has rounded those "eighteen bends" and flows out of Qimen, it takes on a different name: though the pronunciation remains the same, the first character of Changjiang changes, so "阊江" becomes "昌江." The river then passes through the city of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province (famed for its ceramics) before finally flowing into Poyang Lake in Jiangxi.

In the early days, the Changjiang served as Qimen's main transport canal. Since Luxi was located on the main thoroughfare, it became the gateway for all trade with the South, bustling day and night with boats coming and going up and down the waterways. All local exports of tea, timber and clay (in the early days, Jingdezhen's famous ceramics were made from Qimen clay) had to pass through Luxi, as did imported foodstuffs and other general goods. During the peak of this waterborne trade route, in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there were around ten thousand boats active on the stretch of river between Luxi and Jingdezhen, and about a hundred docks. Many businesses and merchants set up shop near the docks around Luxi and nearby ferry crossings, such as Fan Village, Dihu and the Dabei port; in Luxi, a great many merchants gathered to sell Liu An tea under various names. This bustling trade gave rise to a saying: "In Luxi, there's nothing that can't be sold, and nothing that can't be bought."

Luxi (芦溪) gets its name from its geographical surroundings: it's located on low-lying land, at the meeting point of the five rivers. The character *lu* (芦) means "reeds" or "rushes," and *xi* (溪) means "creek" or "stream." After the Changjiang has passed by those "eighteen bends leading to the river," it's harder to find any sign of reeds. So the name Luxi is very evocative of the local atmosphere, using small details to conjure up a picture of idyllic mountain scenery.

The scenery at the famed "eighteen bends leading to the river," really is beautiful. The rivers are crystal clear,

and the area of water that can be navigated by boat totals more than 4000*mu*, or around 270 hectares. The local Huangshan City government is currently working hard on plans to open the area to visitors. The road that surrounds the lake is already well-equipped for sightseeing: with fishing platforms, bamboo rafts, painted pleasure boats and small rowboats. During our trip, we drove around the lake, taking in the "eighteen bends" and witnessing them transform the mountain scenery into thirty-six different variations, and simply immersing ourselves in the relaxed pace of this earthly paradise.

Since ancient times, water has been a very important economic resource in Luxi. In the Qimen County records, there's a passage that reads: "In general, the people from the east supply the load, and those from the South are skilled with boats..." Since water transport was such a big part of life in Luxi, all the villagers were very skilled on the water. Even today, the people of Luxi still hold a big celebration with dragon boat racing for the Dragon Boat Festival; with the beating of drums, the shouting of the rowers and the crackling of firecrackers on the riverbank, it's a joyful and noisy tradition that is still very popular in Qimen today.

Speaking of traditional festivals, if you ever go to Luxi, you must try to see a Nuo Dance (攤舞) being performed. This type of opera performance has slowly developed over its long history—leading some to term the dance as a "living fossil." Locally, it is also known as the "peace dance" and "local opera." It is often performed during the Dragon Boat Festival, as well as during *Layue,* the twelfth lunar month, and *Lichun*, the "Start of Spring." It is traditionally performed to drive away evil, honor one's ancestors and pray for peace and prosperity. Luxi has preserved this custom, as well as the traditional masks used for the performance, to this day.

## *Unmatched for Centuries*

Luxi, the pearl of the Changjiang, remained Qimen's main hub of waterborne trade and a center of great importance for hundreds of years. On the mountains and riverbanks of Luxi, you can find many cultural relics that bear witness to this rich history. Wander through the village and you'll see many ancient dwellings sitting silently among the lush green fields, with whitewashed walls and black tiled roofs. When you enter one of the old houses, you'll notice that it has two small courtyards with open skylights at the front and back. Any water that collected via the openings would flow down into channels running beneath the stone floor; it would first be directed toward the main room before being let out near the front door. This expressed the inhabitants' hopes that the family's fortunes would flow in, toward the house, rather than out of it. It also provided natural ventilation, keeping the room warm in winter and cool in summer. This clever use of water flow is a great example of Luxi's ancestors applying their wisdom to everyday life.

In ancient times, people relied on waterways for transporting goods, and tea was no exception. Just like the birthplace of Liu Bao tea, ancient Luxi developed due to the influence of water transport, and became home to Liu An tea as a result of trade.

Well-known old tea merchants such as Sun Yishun, Wang Yicheng, Xiang Yangchun, Sheng Chunhe and Xin Heshun, all did business in Luxi at one point. Thanks to the fame of this "An tea village," Liu An tea was officially classified as a part of Anhui Province's intangible cultural heritage. In 2011, Luxi Village was designated as a province-level village center, and a village committee was formed to oversee environmental regulation, beautification and new construction. Their efforts included planting pine and cypress trees on the roadsides, and, most striking of all, around 5*mu,* or 0.3 hectares, of lotus ponds. With the tall lotus flowers opening their colorful petals and the lotus leaves swaying gently in the wind, the ponds brought a new sense of energy and liveliness to this historical village.

## *Luxi Today*

The village bridge that spans the Changjiang has some quite unusual characteristics, too. The left-hand side takes the shape of three semicircles arching across the river, and was built by the Nationalist government during the Republic of China. The right-hand side is flat and extends from the peak of the arch to the bank on the other side, and was completed by the Communist government after the People's Republic of China was established. Thanks to the visual symbolism of the two parties cooperating to complete the project, and some clever wordplay, the bridge has come to represent peace and unity. Chinese lends itself to wordplay—there's a saying that has two possible interpretations of the same characters, *guo yuan gong ping* (国圆共平). It can be taken to mean either "Nationalists (build) round and Communists (build) flat," or "the people come together in peace."

The village has a total population of around two thousand, and the villagers belong to eleven different administrative groups, such as Luxi Village, Luxi Street and Bi Tao ("Jade Peach"). Luxi covers a total area of around 33 square kilometers, over 90% of which is dedicated to forestry, with tea production forming the second-largest industry. In 2006, thanks to a satellite photo, this heavily-forested mountain village was discovered to be home to around 118 rare *Phoebe nanmu* trees (traditionally used for furniture and construction) growing across an area of around 0.7 hectares.

*Phoebe nanmu* trees, known as "*diannan* (滇楠)" in Chinese, are not native to Qimen—so how did these centuries-old trees originally take root in Luxi's Jade Peach Village? According to villagers, there was once a local man who went to Yunnan Province to serve as an official. When he retired and returned home, he brought some *diannan* seeds back with him from Yunnan and planted them at the mouth of the water in front of the village, both as flood control and to help balance the *feng shui*. The wood from these trees is considered very precious, and the trees are now a protected species, so it really was an amazing thing to come across such a large, untouched area of them.

While the peace and quiet of Luxi today belies its history as a bustling trading post, it has inherited a fascinating history and culture that have been carried down the river of time to this day. And, so it seems, the mountains and waters of Luxi may still have a few new surprises to reveal among the relics!

茶 *Luxi is a simple, lazy place where living tea can grow untouched and clean.*

黑茶家族

# The Black Tea Family

## Liu An Basket Tea, Liu Bao Tea & Puerh

茶人: *Yan Jie (顏婕)*

*Liu An, Liu Bao and puerh tea have much in common. Traditionally, they all belong to the category of compressed, "post-fermented" black teas, and are all aged to produce a gentle, rich, fragrant liquor. However, despite these similarities, these are actually three completely different teas, each with its own unique qualities. In this article, we'll delve into the similarities and differences between these three varieties in terms of taste, tea plant varietals, manufacturing techniques and packaging. We'll also touch on some of the history and culture behind these three different teas. More recently, we have begun categorizing puerh tea as its own genre of tea, since more people are consuming young sheng (raw) puerh than post-fermented tea, but it is still worthwhile to discuss puerh alongside these other black teas to get an idea of what makes each unique. It should be noted that there are also several varieties of black tea in Hunan not discussed here.*

Liu An (六安) has long been considered an outstanding tea variety in the eyes of tea drinkers. Its liquor is a rich, clear red, and it has a distinctive aged fragrance, reminiscent of ginseng or Chinese medicine. The taste is sweet and mellow with a hint of coolness. After drinking Liu An, you'll notice a comfortable, warming effect in the spleen and stomach. Aged Liu An is gentle and soothing to the digestive system, and aids with calm and focus. It is very popular with the older generation of tea drinkers in Hong Kong. It is also traditionally used in Chinese medicines as a "guiding drug" to activate or enhance the properties of the other ingredients. These qualities meant that Liu An met an important need for people in Southern China as well as the overseas Chinese who settled in Southeast Asia.

Liu Bao tea's most distinctive characteristics are its famed "betel nut" fragrance and its unique style which is often described using four words: "red, rich, aged and mellow."

Liu Bao tea (六堡茶) is produced in mainland China, in Cangwu County in Guangxi Province's Wuzhou City area. However, Liu Bao tea has earned the greatest significance among overseas Chinese living in South-East Asia, particularly Malaysia. The early mining industry in Malaysia played an important role in the history of Liu Bao tea. Malaysia has a tropical climate, and it was difficult for early immigrants to acclimatize to the hot weather. The scorching temperatures, combined with the exhausting physical labor, meant that the miners from mainland China had great difficulty adjusting to the living conditions. Liu Bao tea was originally brought over by these early migrants as a health supplement. Liu Bao is considered a warming tea, which means it's good for alleviating excess heat, dispelling dampness and clearing the throat and lungs. These properties made it the perfect tea for Malaysia's tropical climate and for the needs of the miners, so it was very popular. As well as bringing the Chinese miners a comforting reminder of home, Liu Bao tea also became an essential health tonic.

Thanks to the high demand for Liu Bao, many merchants and tea businesses sprang up in Malaysia to supply the market. Liu Bao tea became deeply entrenched in Malaysian culture and day-to-day life, and retains an important place in local history.

Aged puerh tea (老普洱茶), with its unique character produced through aging, is highly esteemed by tea lovers. It has a long history that started in Yunnan Province. Originally, it was largely produced for export. Tea drinkers and collectors in Taiwan and Hong Kong gradually came to discover the depth and breadth of puerh tea, in terms of the tea itself as well as the rich tea culture surrounding it. Thus began a "golden age" of puerh, where it become immensely popular in mainland China and the southern regions of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and, to a lesser extent, amongst the Chinese population of Malaysia.


普洱茶
Puerh
六堡茶
Liu Bao
六安茶
Liu An


Puerh tea (普洱茶) is traditionally compressed into cakes or *bing* (餅) and can be classified according to age, with several traditional classifications, including "antique" cakes (from the mid-1950s or thereabouts), "stamped" tea cakes (from the 1950s to the 1960s) and "seven sons" tea cakes (from 1966 to 1979), among others. Because of its capacity for aging and its rich history and culture, old puerh is still very valuable, and even new puerh is no less valued—it really is a very popular tea.

## A Plot of Soil: Tea Tree Varietals

### Liu An

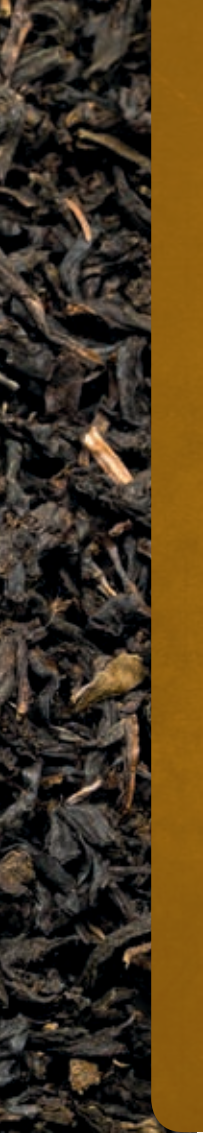
Qimen County in Anhui is famed for its tea. Liu An is made from the *Zhuye* (楮葉) tea plant varietal, which is native to Qimen. The *Zhuye* tea plant is a hardy, bush-like varietal with a semi-open branch shape, and propagates via sexual reproduction. This varietal produces a steady harvest of high-quality leaves, and is mainly found throughout parts of Anhui Province, including Tafang, Pingli, Rongkou, Luxi and Likou. Although technically there is no specification as to which leaf variety An tea should be made from, it's generally acknowledged that *Zhuye* leaves produce the best Liu An. *Zhuye* plants are currently one of the most preferred tea varietals in mainland China, and have also been introduced to other places, such as India, Japan, Vietnam, Pakistan and the former Soviet Union—so it really is a world-famous tea plant varietal.

### Liu Bao

The tea plant varietal used to make Liu Bao originates in Liu Bao Village in Cangwu County, Guangxi Province. The varietal is usually simply referred to as "Liu Bao tea," or "the original Liu Bao varietal," to differentiate it from the other varietals of tea plant that grow in the area. These include the large-leaf and medium-leaf varietals that were brought over from other provinces, such as Yunnan and Hunan, in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the *Camellia sinensis* cultivar, "*Guilu* 1," that has been planted in the area in the last few years. Because this varietal has both male and female trees which cross-pollinate, the trees have undergone a long process of natural selection, and so are quite hardy and adaptable. There's quite a lot of individual variance between trees of this varietal in, for example, the color of the buds: there are green bud, yellow-green bud, red bud and purple bud types. They all tend to bud early, and can also be divided into early-budding and slightly later-budding varietals. In terms of leaf shapes, there are a few types, including long leaf, oval leaf, regular leaf and "bamboo shoot."

### Puerh

According to China's 2002 International Puerh Tea Research Symposium, this is the official word on the original home of puerh: "Puerh is a famous historic tea variety, with a distinctive character owing to its terroir and manufacturing process:



# 自成一類

## A Genre in its Own Right

**Puerh tea is sometimes put into the black tea category, but it should actually have a category all its own. Traditionally, all puerh was fermented before consumption, whether artificially, in the case of shou, or naturally over time, in the case of sheng. Tea lovers back in the day considered new, sheng puerh as "unfinished" and rarely drank it, except to see how it was aging. Therefore, all puerh tea was fermented and fit nicely into the black tea genre, which is categorized by post-production fermentation.**

**Over the years, we have talked extensively about our unique categorization of tea, which is important because it helps you explore and understand tea better. Traditionally, there were six genres of tea: white, yellow, green, black, red and oolong. Categories are always arbitrary, ultimately, and only useful for communication and education. And when our understanding of the world changes, the world itself changes, or perhaps both, then our categories also need to shift. And that is what has happened in the tea world—change. Puerh used to reside comfortably in the black tea category, but that was back when all the puerh consumed was either naturally fermented (aged) sheng or artificially fermented shou tea. All the tea was dark, in other words. Due to the unique terroir of Yunnan, the very special trees used to produce puerh, its unique history, processing, aging and appreciation, we have found that students of tea understand the genres of tea much more quickly and clearly when we separate puerh as a seventh genre. And the fact that students of tea understand tea better and more expediently is all the argument we need for presenting the genres in this way!**

**One solution to this change in tea production/consumption would be to put young, sheng puerh in the green tea category, and aged sheng along with shou in the black tea category, but that seems much more confusing than just giving puerh tea its own genre. We think that since it's the oldest tea, and from the birthplace of all tea, puerh deserves its own genre!**

it is made from the leaves of the *dianqing* (滇青) tea plant, a large-leaf varietal from Yunnan Province." This large-leaf puerh varietal grows mainly in the regions of Simao and Xishuangbanna, around the Lancang River valley in Yunnan. It reproduces sexually and is upright and tree-shaped.

## Calm of Heart & Nimble of Hand: Manufacturing

### Liu An

An tea is classified as a "post-fermented," compressed black tea. The manufacturing process is divided into two phases: initial processing and refining. The process is delicate and complex, and takes more than half a year from start to finish. The tea is usually picked with three leaves to one bud. Initial processing involves four steps: spreading the leaves, kill-green, rolling and drying. After this initial processing phase, the dry tea leaves are black and glossy, and when brewed the flavor and leftover leaves are quite similar to semi-processed puerh *maocha*. It's not until after the refining process that Liu An tea takes on its own unique character. The refining process has ten steps to it: sifting, winnowing, picking out debris, blending, high-heat firing, "night dew," steaming, compressing into baskets, baking over a frame and packaging. Of these steps, a few stand out as unique: the tea leaves are fired over a high heat then left out overnight to absorb the dew before being baked slowly over a bamboo frame until dry.

The high-heat firing step is also known as "full firing," and is a real test of the tea master's experience—the temperature must be controlled very precisely. The "night dew" step happens around *Bailu*, the "White Dew" solar term in mid- to late September. After firing, the leaves are spread out to a depth of around ten centimeters and left out to absorb the moisture from the dew; they are generally turned over once during the night. Later, once the tea has been compressed into bamboo baskets, the baskets are tied together in rows then placed on a wooden frame, over hot coals, in a special drying room, with a cotton quilt laid over the top to evenly regulate the heat.

### Liu Bao

According to the standard definition, Liu Bao tea is made using the new buds, leaves and stems of the tea plant. The traditional manufacturing process also involves two phases. Initial processing begins with the kill-green step, followed by first rolling, "heaping," second rolling and drying. The refining process includes sifting, winnowing, picking out debris, blending, initial steaming and heaping, second steaming, to compress the tea, and aging. The heaping step is part of the oxidation process and is essential to the character of this unique black tea.

### Puerh

As with the other two kinds of tea, the puerh manufacturing process can be divided into two main stages (often at farm and factory separately).

Initial processing includes pan-firing to halt oxidation (known as "kill-green"), hand-rolling and sun-drying. The refining phase involves sifting out the tea dust, picking out the stems, winnowing to remove yellow leaves, and then grading the leaves by thickness and length. The resulting tea can then be sold as loose leaf, or steamed and compressed into various shapes, and then is exported to places such as Tibet, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Myanmar.

After the kill-green and rolling steps, the tea is sun-dried, and the resulting product is puerh *maocha,* often referred to as "raw" or "unprocessed" tea leaves (though they're really semi-processed). In modern times, depending on how the *maocha* is processed, it can be made into sheng puerh or shou puerh. To make shou ("ripe") puerh, the *maocha* is "heaped" into moist piles to oxidize before being compressed. For sheng ("raw") puerh, the oxidization step is skipped, and the tea is compressed into the finished product straight away, before being allowed to mature through aging.

## Culture Made Tangible: Tea Packaging

### Liu An

The traditional packaging of Liu An can be broken down into three components: the inner basket, the middle layer, and the outer layer. The inner layer is a squat, oval-shaped basket woven from bamboo strips. Bamboo is an excellent material, as it's not only economical and readily available, but also flexible and resilient. When packing the tea, the baskets are lined with bamboo leaves, which protects the tea and enhances its fragrance and cooling properties.

Old Liu An is usually packed with around 500 grams per basket. The baskets are then put into pairs, then three pairs are strung together into a row, then ten rows are strung together into a block. So, one block of tea contains fifty individual baskets, or around thirty kilograms of tea. These days, however, new Liu An is often packed in 250-gram baskets for ease of shipping. The smaller baskets are put into pairs, with four pairs to one row, and seven rows in a block, so you end up with fifty-six baskets at a total weight of around fourteen kilograms.

### Liu Bao

Although Liu Bao tea can be sold in many forms—loose leaf or compressed into bricks or cakes—the most traditional method is to steam it and then compress it into baskets. Although the baskets used are similar in appearance to Liu An baskets, they tend to be much bigger—baskets of old Liu Bao can hold as much as forty or fifty kilograms of tea. But because their large size made them difficult to transport, Liu Bao later began to be sold in one-kilogram baskets, as well as tea cakes, boxes, or loose-leaf in paper bags. However, if you want to accurately determine the vintage of an old Liu Bao tea, the only reliable way to tell is still to look at the markings and characters printed on the original old basket and the burlap sack that it was wrapped in.

### Puerh

Puerh tea comes in many shapes and forms. It can be compressed into rectangular tea bricks (磚茶, *zhuan cha*), bowl shapes (沱茶, *tuo cha*), or round flat cakes (餅茶, *bing cha*). These are largely made with sheng puerh *maocha*, which is then steamed to soften it and shaped using various molds or cloth balls. Shaping the tea has become a unique part of puerh tea culture. One particularly well-known variety is "seven sons" tea cakes, or *qi zi bing* (七子餅). These cakes got their name from the way tea merchants used to wrap them in tall stacks of seven cakes for ease of transport. Each cake weighed around 375 grams, and the tea stacks were packed together in groups of twelve, so altogether they weighed about thirty kilograms. Once they were all packed up, the tea cakes were transported along the old tea horse road, and sold to tea drinkers in all sorts of places.

# 茶竹老朋友

# Gongfu Teapot
# 功夫茶壺

Very early on in my tea journey, I noticed that most of the tea teachers I was learning from all used the same style of Yixing purple-sand pot (*zisha*, 紫砂) when preparing gongfu tea: with a large, flat and round button, jar-shaped body and a cannon spout. Later, I found out that these pots are called "wagon wheel pots (*ju lun ju*, 巨輪珠)." And every teacher I respected had at least one, while many seemed to use them exclusively. These humble brown-to-purple pots spoke to me, as they do to most tea lovers. They suit the aesthetic of tea: simple, unadorned, modest and yet somehow powerful. Wagon wheel pots are like the old Daoist master who walks around in plain sight, looking like everyone else but holding deep and profound teachings most people will pass by. From the beginning, I suspected that these pots also held deeper truths—that there was more to them than a pleasing simplicity. "Do they make better tea?" I wondered. And so, like my teachers before me, I looked past the plain and often crude shapes of wagon wheel pots to the dark and mysterious elixir steeping within, searching for the secrets these old pots had to tell.

In the eighteenth century, several Japanese tea lovers began resisting what they perceived to be an excessive formality and constriction in *Chanoyu*. They cultivated nostalgia for the scholar poets of ancient China, creating retreat homes in the mountains where they appreciated Nature, painting, calligraphy, poetry, music, the classics and a revitalized tea practice focused on steeped tea, called "*sencha do*," literally "the Way of sencha." Sencha had been around in Japan for some time, but the name technically refers to "simmered/boiled tea," which is how it was prepared up until these Edo tea lovers started steeping Japanese, and, to a lesser extent, Chinese teas. This would, of course, influence the way tea was produced, forever changing Japanese tea farming, production and appreciation.

Throughout much of the history of Japanese tea, there was a preference for Chinese antiques that sometimes got out of hand, resulting in collectors paying a fortune for pieces. This is, in part, why Master Rikyu turned to local raku potters for his bowls, suggesting that tea and teaware celebrate simplicity. It should come as no surprise, then, that

# Ju Lun Ju Teapots

茶人: ***Wu De***

*We have expanded this section of the magazine to include more than just gongfu tea experiments. Don't worry, we'll continue to offer you experiments to improve your gongfu tea. But we also wanted to use these pages to explore more facets of gonfgu tea, like this month's exciting article on ju lun ju teapots, which are a staple of tea teachers throughout Asia.*

the later tea lovers who began practicing steeped tea fell in love with Yixing purple-sand teaware. At the time, only the port of Nagasaki was open for legal import, and goods were heavily taxed. And some *zisha* pots were more valuable than silver. Most of the poets, artists and scholars interested in steeped tea were wealthy, though, and began collecting and eventually commissioning Yixing teaware for their practice.

And this brings us to the most obvious reason that tea teachers today favor wagon wheel pots: their simplicity. During the Edo period, as the Way of sencha was beginning in Japan, the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) was at its peak under the rule of Qianlong. The arts flourished under his long reign (officially 1735–1796, though he actually retained power until his death in 1799). Like all works of art, Yixing teapots rose in quality and beauty. However, as many new aesthetic trends began, and pots became more and more elegant, some of the simplicity that tea lovers celebrated in Yixingware was lost. Potters began producing more complicated, decorative pots in new styles, each expanding on traditional forms—most of which began in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). As mentioned above, the new Japanese tradition of steeped tea was begun mostly out of a push against what they saw as constriction in *Chanoyu* coupled with a deep nostalgia for classical Chinese culture (often over-glorified to the point of myth). They sought to live like the Daoist masters of old, skilled in brush and in life. Consequently, these tea lovers favored simpler, older styles of teapots that celebrated the simple, free and unadorned style of brewing they were cultivating, as well as the antique, rustic, hermit-like aesthetic they were creating. Over the next two centuries, countless wagon wheel pots would be commissioned and sent to Japan.

The true wagon wheel shape, with the large, flat button became popular in the late Qing Dynasty (Meiji in Japan), and hundreds of these pots were exported—more and more as trade increased and Japan opened up its ports. Later, in the 1970s and '80s, when Taiwanese tea scholars began to write books about Yixing teaware, they categorized all the pots that were exported to Japan as "wagon wheel," even though the earlier pots didn't actually have the large, flat button that characterizes this type of pot.

The name has stuck, though, and tea lovers today also call any pot in this style "*ju lun ju*." Not all "wagon wheel" pots have a wagon wheel button, but they all were exported to Japan, have cannon spouts and are simple, and sometimes even crude in design. As you can see, the simplicity of wagon wheel pots is where an appreciation of them begins and ends.

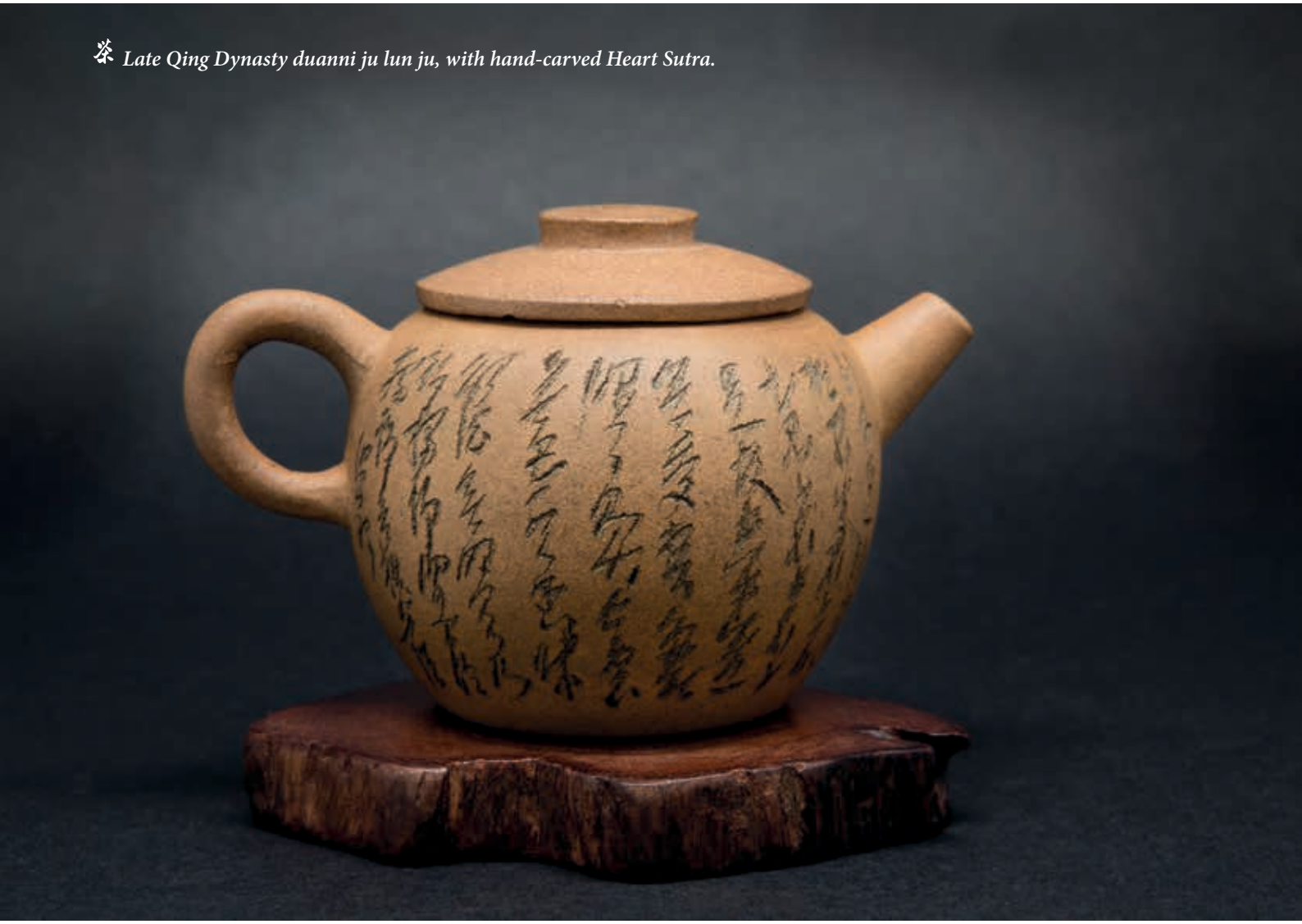
As the years have passed and I have traveled further in my gongfu tea practice, I have reduced and simplified both for functional and aesthetic reasons. When I started my tea journey, I watched my teachers use the simplest of wares and brewing methods, and wondered why they weren't attracted to the elegant wares and ways I was: the curvy pots, dragon-egg pots inlaid with silver, and many other examples of the amazing heritage of skill and mastery in antique and modern teaware alike. But as time passes, one finds that like Lu Yu said so long ago in the oldest surviving work on tea, the *Cha Jing*, "The spirit of tea is frugality." As my life, practice and tea simplified, the unadorned wagon wheel pots of my teachers started to sparkle with the ordinary glow that Tea teaches us to celebrate. The understated lines and elevation of function over form started to shine more brightly as the cups and bowls of tea passed by with the seasons, each sip showing me in true Zen form just how special, important and bountiful the most ordinary moments and objects can be. Frugality, indeed.

## *Beyond Simplicity to Function*

As the wagon wheel turned, I began to discover more and deeper reasons why nearly all tea teachers favor these magical pots. Beyond simplicity, availability and price have played a role in the widespread love for these pots. Cultural habits, happenstance and history have changed the destiny of these pots, and put them on the shelves of so many tea lovers around the world.

Japan has always been prone to earthquakes, which means that collectors of anything fragile have learned over time to be protective. As I mentioned earlier, the first *zisha* pots to be exported to Japan were often worth more than silver. They were wrapped carefully in cloth and stored in wooden boxes and then in safe cabinets. Japanese people are also famously careful and focused in their daily lives, and due to the influence of Zen, they also cultivated an appreciation of and devotion to the simple. The teapots there were not only cared for more deeply, but also in a different way.

One of the magic things about antique teaware (of many) is the people who have used the piece over time, and the energy they've left behind on it.



*Late Qing Dynasty duanni ju lun ju, with hand-carved Heart Sutra.*

In general, this is another reason that tea teachers favor simple, old teaware, as fancy teaware made for wealthy patrons often sits on shelves, used less often than the simple cups or pots used every day by simple, kind-hearted, ordinary folk. Beyond that, the Chajin in Japan at that time all had a more overtly spiritual relationship to tea. Many of these pots found their way into the hands of monks, for example. Since *zisha* pots were so rare and Japanese people treasured them as aspects of their spiritual cultivation, these wagon wheel pots were often deeply honored. We have a few in the Center that were named, and then later owners wrote beautiful poems on the box that protects them—poems with lines like "may the liquor ever flow from this pot in streams of enlightenment." Having a teapot that was passed down with such reverence and care definitely makes a difference in the way it feels, if not in the tea you can make with it.

Because teapots were more common in China, a lot of people didn't take as good care of them. Also, the Communist Revolution of 1949, and the subsequent Cultural Revolution, destroyed a lot of "old" things, which meant that much less antique teaware survived in China. Beyond the radiance lent to wagon wheel pots by the heart and spirit of the Japanese Chajin who loved and treasured them, there is the very practical truth that a lot more of these pots survived to the present time and many in mint (or near mint) condition.

As we fast-forward to the modern era, a tea lover looking for a nice antique teapot has a much better chance of finding a wagon wheel than anything else. Modern Japanese don't value them as much as Chinese collectors, though that is changing as they become rarer. Also, there are more of them and they are in great condition, often with a custom box. Finally, teapot collectors are very rarely interested in wagon wheel pots. They collect pots made by famous artists, pots that are elegant and beautiful, made of rare clay or that stand out in some other way. Once again, in true Daoist form, the simplicity and crudeness of wagon wheel pots means that they have always been ignored by collectors, which also means they are always cheaper. And if you are looking for a teapot to make tea, rather than a collector's item, a cheaper price makes a big difference.

*The spout really means more functionally speaking than any other part of a teapot; it is also the hardest element to craft.*

Sure, wagon wheel pots are gorgeous in their simplicity, if you have the eye to appreciate them, and there are many more of them and in better shape (and for lower prices), but what about where it counts? Do they make better tea? If so, why?

## The Cannon Spout

As we discussed earlier, so-called "wagon wheel" pots come in a variety of shapes and sizes, though the large, flat-buttoned ones are the most common, since more of those were exported to Japan later on. But the one thing they all have in common, aside from a simple form, is the cannon spout. And therein lies one of the deeper reasons why tea lovers favor them, and the one reason that actually applies to brewing as opposed to an aesthetic preference or just the happenstance that there are more of them available for less money. (There are other reasons why wagon wheel pots make great tea, but they will have to wait for a future article, as this is just a general introduction.)

For beginners, a spout with a limited range of flow, speed and distance is very helpful. Each spout has a range of pour, which means the amount and speed that the tea liquor comes out of the spout. The greater the range, the more you can control whether the pour is soft and slight or fast and gushing. The shape of the spout also determines the distance from the pot itself that the stream will pour. The greater this range is, the more you can choose to pour straight down or to a distance of several inches. There is always some room to work with any pot, but when you are starting out, it is helpful if the ranges of both the flow and distance are narrower. In other words, you want the pot to help you, as opposed to offering a huge array of speeds, flows and distances of pour. This will make your tea smoother, more precise and much less sloppy overall, since beginners will find that it is difficult to control a wide range with any degree of accuracy or consistency. There will be a lot of spillage, in other words, and little control over the flow.

With the cannon spouts of wagon wheel pots, the range is as wide as any pot can be. This frustrates beginners, as they find themselves dribbling, dumping out small bits of tea leaves and often spilling. But as your practice advances, the freedom this range affords you starts to become more and more spectacular. This progress is true of the equipment used in any art. In photography, it is often helpful to start with a camera that helps you. Cameras have advanced a lot these days, and those with technology that allows you to focus more on composition and other aspects of the art are very helpful as you learn. But the further you go in this art, the more manual control you want over the camera. What was helpful before becomes restrictive. You want more freedom, at least in most situations. Similarly, as time has passed and I have gained more control over the teapot, the range of flow and distance I can pour with a wagon wheel pot makes a huge difference in making better tea, especially as I've become sensitive to how the distance, speed and flow of the pour affect different kinds of tea. For example, puerh is much better poured quickly.

## *More Questions Than Answers*

There is a lot more to say about these simple, yet profound pots. Like the wooden wheels after which they are named, they are simple, ordinary pots used to make tea on a day-to-day basis, not rare collector's items for special occasions. And also like the wheel, they are a very profound part of our history and growth. I will try to come back to these magical pots—the most important of the gongfu treasures in the Center—in future issues, sharing more of my experience with them over the years.

However, this article may also inspire some deeper, underlying questions amongst the many insightful Global Tea Hut readers out there, like why choose an antique pot over a modern one, wagon wheel or otherwise? Why not just commission a modern potter to make a wagon wheel pot? That may be a good choice for many of us, and if you can find the right potter, you may wind up with a great pot indeed, but as you can see, we still favor antique ones, and for good reasons. I'm glad you've asked these questions while reading this article, but the answers to why an antique Yixing is so much better than a modern one will have to wait until a future session of Gongfu Teapot…

巨輪珠

*Early Republic pot, without the wagon's wheel button.*

*Modern "yao bian (kiln-changed)," wood-fired ju lun ju pot.*

一窺六安名

# A Look at Liu An's Names

## Liu An Stems, Melon Seed & Fragrance

茶人: *Lu Tungjun (盧亭均)*

*Liu An belongs to the black tea family and is known for the way it is compressed into bamboo baskets, giving rise to two different names: "Liu An basket tea" (六安藍茶) and "Liu An bamboo rain hat tea" (六安笠茶). In English, you may also see it called "Lu'an" tea—liu and lu are alternate pronunciations of the character "六." Liu An tea is well-known around Hong Kong, eastern Guangdong, and Southeast Asia. For a long time, it was mainly supplied to Southern Chinese nobility and wealthy Southeast Asian merchants, which led local growers to give it a third title: "sacred tea." Let's explore this tea's many names throughout history!*

Liu An basket tea is made from carefully selected raw materials and is highly regarded among black teas. The finished tea has a glossy black luster to it and the liquor is strong and red; the flavor rich, sweet and clear. It should ideally be aged for at least three years—much of the tea's identity lies in this one word, "aged." Early on, it was used in medicines as a "guiding herb" to enhance efficacy, and according to Traditional Chinese Medicine it also has cooling properties that dispel excess internal heat. These qualities, along with its sweet, mellow flavor, have seen Liu An enjoy widespread popularity both in China and abroad, from the past until the present day. We are so glad to celebrate the resurgence of Liu An tea.

As a result of Liu An's fame, there are several other types of tea that share its name: Liu An Stems, Liu An Melon Seeds, and Fragrant Liu An. Many tea lovers find this quite confusing, so in this article we'll take a detailed look at each of these three teas, in the hopes that it will help clear up the mystery for all of you Liu An tea lovers out there!

### *Liu An "Bones": Stems Without Leaves*

This tea is made up entirely of tea stems, with no leaves—hence its Chinese name, *liu an gu* (六安骨), which literally means "Liu An bones." It's sometimes also referred to as *liu an zhi* (六安枝), or "Liu An twigs." If you smell the dry tea "leaves," you'll notice a sort of oven-baked aroma. The flavor is mild, and the stalks are aromatic with a subtle sweetness. This tea was always quite popular among the older generation in Hong Kong. Sadly, it more or less disappeared from the market around the early '90s, leaving many tea lovers to search far and wide for it—and perhaps eventually to chance upon the story of this tea's origins and the reason for its disappearance.

The original material used to make Liu An Stems was, in fact, the stems from Anxi Tieguanyin tea. Back in the Planned Economy Era, so the story goes, China's tea exports were restricted by quotas. The Tieguanyin tea leaves produced in Anxi were usually exported with the stems still attached, to places like Hong Kong and Malaysia. The tea merchants then had to remove the stalks themselves before they could sell the tea, but they were reluctant to waste the tea stems by simply throwing them out. So, they re-baked the stems and sold them cheaply as a new type of tea. Because of its reasonable price, this new tea became the go-to choice of many Hong Kong households. After being re-baked, the tea stems had a flame-cured aroma and a gentle yet rich liquor. Add more than thirty years of aging, and the tea became even more mature and interesting, gaining quite a following among Hong Kongers and overseas Chinese.

Toward the end of the 1980s, however, China underwent export reforms, and a group of Anxi tea merchants went to Hong Kong to sell their tea themselves, so they no longer needed to export the finished tea with the stems still attached. This meant that the source material for Liu An Stems was no longer available, and the tea slowly disappeared from the market.

## Liu An Melon Seed: Uniquely Shaped Leaves

Liu An Melon Seed is a green tea named for the shape of its leaves. In Chinese, it's known as "*liu an gua pian* (六安瓜片)," or sometimes simply "*pian cha* (片茶)," literally "seed tea." This tea's main characteristic is that it only contains the tea leaves themselves, with no tea buds or stems. It's also harvested a little later than other green teas—the best time for picking is around *Guyu*, or "Grain Rain," the sixth term in the Chinese solar calendar, which runs from April 20th to May 4th. As the name of the tea suggests, the leaves resemble melon seeds in their shape when brewed—they are naturally flat and open, straight and evenly shaped, with slightly raised edges and a lovely emerald-green color. The liquor has a clear, refreshing aroma, and the flavor is mild and fresh with a sweet aftertaste. High-quality Liu An Melon Seed will also show a subtle hint of ripe chestnut.

Liu An Melon Seed tea is produced in three counties of Anhui Province: Lu'an, Jinzhai and Huoshan counties. In particular, Qiyun Mountain in Lu'an City's Jinzhai County produces some of the best tea of this variety. When brewed, it produces a wonderful, wafting steam that rises through the air like mist, giving it a most poetic name: "Qiyun Cloud and Mist Melon Seed."

Many of the processing techniques for Liu An Melon Seed tea are quite unique, from picking to shaping, firing to drying. There are five main steps in the manufacturing process. It begins with pan-firing over a lower heat, then a higher heat; then three "firing" or baking steps: first firing, "small flame" firing, and "old flame" firing. Thanks to its fine quality and cultural and historical significance, Liu An Melon Seed has been recognized as one of China's ten famous historic teas. A considerable area in the Lu'an region is devoted to growing this excellent tea, and it has gained quite a following in the overseas market too, from Europe to North America, Korea and Japan.

## Fragrant Liu An: A Hong Kong Blend

Fragrant Liu An, or *xiang liu an* (香六安) is a house-made tea blend created in Hong Kong's old-style tea houses. It's made using loose-leaf

Yunnan puerh and the buds of *Aglaia odorata*—a shrub with tiny, fragrant, pale-yellow flowers. In Chinese, this plant is known as *mizi lan* (米籽兰), or "rice seed orchid." In addition to these two ingredients, the tea blend contains green tea and red tea leaf fragments—this was originally a way for the tea houses to use up lower grade tea leaves. This blend made for an original flavor, and Fragrant Liu An has been quite popular for a few decades among people looking for a mid- to low-priced tea.

Hopefully, our broad overview of these quite different teas that all share a name has helped shed some light on the situation! As we've seen, Liu An Stems, in fact, bear no relation at all to Liu An basket tea, but are instead a tea variety invented by thrifty Hong Kong tea merchants to salvage their Tieguanyin stems. Liu An Melon Seeds, on the other hand, share half of their name with Liu An, due to their common place of origin: Qiyun Mountain in Jinzhai County, in the Lu'an City region, has long been known for producing high-quality Liu An Melon Seed tea. The other half of the name, of course, comes from its distinctly shaped leaves that resemble melon seeds. And finally, we have Fragrant Liu An, which is a signature in-house blend of old-style Hong Kong tea houses, made mainly from puerh leaf and flower buds.

So, despite their shared names, all of these teas are quite distinct from each other. Liu An basket tea is the most famous of the group, renowned for its soothing, thirst-quenching liquor, and its medicinal properties. While Liu An basket tea is highly regarded for its aged quality and its fascinating history, Liu An Stems, Liu An Melon Seeds and Fragrant Liu An are all unique teas in their own right. Each one has its own story and its own special charm.

穿越時空之六安

# Liu An Tea Through Time

茶人: *Zheng Jianxin (鄭建新)*

*This historic tea, prized for its aged fragrance and rich, enchanting flavor, was once loved by Chinese Chajin everywhere. After a half-century of obscurity, its popularity was revived and it once again began to spread throughout China. The older generation of Chajin who still remembered the tea were overjoyed, and new tea drinkers were smitten; you could almost say it spread like wildfire. Across the channel in Taiwan, however, the tea has still not truly re-entered the market—there is hardly a trace of it. So, many An tea lovers across the strait can still but daydream about drinking this magical tea.*

I first learned of Liu An tea in the early 1990s. At that time it hadn't been very long since China had opened up its economy to the outside world, and the tea industry was flourishing. Since I had been born into a tea family and had long lived in a tea-growing region (my hometown is the birthplace of Qimen red tea), and I had some experience of growing and making tea, I felt that I needed to do something to further the cause of tea. So, I started to dabble in all things tea-related. At that time, my neighbor, a fellow by the name of Huang You, happened to have an old tea-label stamp that had been passed down from his wife's family, and didn't know if there was any particular significance behind it, so he asked me to come and take a look, which I gladly did. The stamp was about the size of a cigarette box and was carved from camphor wood, with detailed pictures and script. At the top was a picture of two deer, with the character for longevity—*shou* (壽)—and the words "First-grade An tea" set in between. At the bottom were two phoenixes facing the sun, and between them were the words "Genuine goods at a fair price." Along both sides were patterns representing the god of longevity, like those you see on old copper coins, surrounding the following words:

"This is Longevity brand tea, made with secret knowledge passed down through generations for well over a hundred years. This is the genuine article, famed throughout Guangdong, Hong Kong and trading ports everywhere across the oceans. The branches of the tea plants multiply day by day; each batch is slightly different. The leaves are carefully selected from trees that grow at Shouzhuo Mountain Lodge, irrigated generously until they flourish. Our label is always made with buds picked before the rains; when selected and processed with the right methods, the tea has an exceptional fragrance that lingers in the memory. Its benefits include dispelling dampness; it truly is a wonderful tonic, a pearl among An teas. Dear reader, you may inspect this product with your own eyes and take note of the authentic labels; this is a genuine top-grade tea. This is the solemn declaration of Li Xiaofeng, the proprietor of Shouzhuo Mountain Lodge, Xin'an, Southern Qimen."

I asked Huang You where the stamp had come from; he told me that his father-in-law was from the south of Qimen, and that their family had once been involved in the tea business; their tea label was called Xiang Yang Chun (向陽春). Though I was baffled by the stamp, I was sure there must be more to the story behind it, so I asked Mr. Huang if he'd be willing to sell it to me. "It's a family heirloom," he responded, "I can't sell it." I saw that he meant it, so even though I longed to take the stamp with me, I couldn't bear to part him from his prized possession. Safeguarding history and culture to pass down to future generations is the mark of a person gifted with humility and honesty, and ought to be supported. So I asked if I could make a copy of the stamp's inscription to keep and Mr. Huang happily agreed. In those days, we weren't equipped with digital cameras and the like, so the best I could do was to take a rubbing of the inscription and illustrations. Ever since that day, I've felt a special connection to An tea.

## *Tracing the History of Liu An Tea*

I started reading up about An tea in my spare time, and discovered that it was a famous historic tea produced in Qimen County's Changjiang river valley in Anhui Province. It had its heyday during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. It rose in popularity during the reign of Qing Emperor Yongzheng, flourished during the reigns of the Daoguang and Xianfeng emperors, then began to decline during the reign of the Guangxu Emperor, the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, who reigned around the turn of the century. Then, during the period of unrest, beginning with the Sino-Japanese war in the 1930s and 1940s, An tea was lost altogether. The elegance and charm of this tea saw it make an appearance in several literary classics, including *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *The Plum in the Golden Vase,* and *The Scholars.* It continued to sell reasonably well up until the 1930s. In 1932, a volume entitled *The Qimen Tea Industry* was published, detailing forty-seven An tea businesses that were active at the time. Most of their brand names were based around one of two words: either *shun* (顺, meaning "favorable") or *chun* (春, meaning "spring," as in the season). There were about thirty brands with names incorporating *shun,* and about six with *chun*.

Among the *chun* brands was Xiang Yang Chun—the same name that my neighbor Mr. Huang mentioned in connection with his wife's family. According to the records, the Xiang Yangchun brand was situated in the southern village of Rongkou, not in the fabled "Shouzhuo Mountain Lodge." I also learned that traditional An tea has three different labels: one on the top of the packaging, one in the middle, and one on the bottom. The stamp that Huang You's family had was for printing the bottom label. Discovering these details made me realize how much depth there was to this tea—it was certainly worth the time to explore its origins! It wasn't long before I also found out the story of how Luxi Village had set out to revive the lost art of An tea production. The initiative behind this began with one Mr. Guan Fenfa (關奮發), a well-known tea master from Hong Kong. He sent a basket of old An tea to mainland China, as a token of the fervent hope of tea lovers throughout Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Southeast Asia that this revered tea might be produced once more. Upon hearing this story, I got the feeling that I was definitely putting my energy in the right place, and my enthusiasm redoubled. From then on, I threw myself wholeheartedly into pursuing knowledge of An tea, determined to get to the bottom of its fascinating story.

The first time I encountered An tea in person was in May of 2002, at Anhui Province's first Tea Expo, held in the city of Wuhu. I lead a group from Qimen to attend the Expo. Among them was an An tea merchant who, upon seeing me gazing longingly at the baskets of An tea, promptly gifted me a basket. I was so attached to this basket of tea that I placed it on a bookshelf so I could stare at it lovingly from time to time, and couldn't bring myself to open it. Finally, one day, the allure of the tea got the better of me and I opened the bamboo basket.

As soon as I tasted that rich, red liquor with its faint scent of bamboo, I was instantly captivated, and surrendered myself willingly to its charm. Afterwards, I found out that these small baskets of An tea, with their bamboo lining are supposed to be stored for two to three years before they're considered suitable for drinking. It's a tea that becomes richer and more fragrant with age, and won't spoil or go moldy. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, it's considered to have cooling properties, which means it's good for dispelling excess dampness and internal heat. As well as being brewed for drinking, it can also be added to medicines as a "guiding drug" to aid efficacy. In Southern China and Southeast Asia, people have even honored it with the title "sacred tea." All this made me realize that my knowledge of An tea was still not deep enough. I was trying to understand An tea without ever witnessing the manufacturing process firsthand; if you don't have a feel for the tea on an emotional level, how can you hope to gain a deep understanding of it on a rational level?

## *My Dedication to Exploring An Tea*

Finally, there came a day when I had the opportunity to visit Luxi Village, the home of An tea. The village leader greeted us warmly and took us to the Sun Yishun Tea Factory. There, surrounded by bulging bags of tea and brimming baskets suspended from beams, I finally experienced the rich smell of An tea firsthand. The tea master who greeted me was named Wang Zhenxiang (汪鎮響). He told us that he had worked in the village administration in the early years, and had a hand in the revival of An tea production. After many years of hard work, in 1992, he finally obtained an official certificate of approval from the Ministry of Agriculture, and from 1997 onwards, he served as the registered agent of the Sun Yishun Tea Factory corporation.

When I enquired about the factory's current output, Mr. Wang told me that the yearly output of the whole village was around 200 tons, of which his factory produced about 50 tons. He also told me about the five different grades of tea: *tegong* (特貢) or "special tribute" grade, *gongjian* (貢尖) or "tribute tip," *maojian* (毛尖) or "downy tip," then first grade and second grade. I asked about the manufacturing process, and he explained that there are two main phases to it: initial processing, then refining, with fourteen different steps altogether. As for the raw tea leaves, Mr. Wang explained that An tea is not, in fact, made from leaves harvested from old mountain trees, as folk wisdom erroneously purports, but rather, from top-quality buds and leaves harvested in the ten or so days around the *Guyu* solar term, which falls in late April to early May. He also told us a story about the bamboo baskets that An tea is packaged in. Legend has it that Yan Xishan, a warlord who ruled in Shanxi Province for most of the early half of the 1900s, was particularly enamored by these baskets, and would drink a basket's worth of An tea every month, which is why people designed this type of packaging.

After exploring the Sun Yishun factory, we also paid a visit to Jiangnan Spring; established in 1992, it was Luxi's earliest An tea factory. It's quite a large-scale factory, and very orderly: upstairs were row upon row of An tea baskets stacked neatly, waiting to be shipped—it seemed that sales were doing well. The factory head, named Wang Shengping (汪昇平), was the nephew of Sun Yishun himself, the originator of the well-known brand name. I had learned of Mr. Wang quite a while ago, as he had earned quite a lot of recognition in relation to An tea, including the official approval of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as industry awards. He patiently answered all my questions, all the while bringing out one tea vintage after another to satiate my curiosity. I found that the two-year old An tea was slightly sweet, whereas the four-year-old tea was richer in flavor; there was also a noticeable difference in the color of the liquor. I asked Mr. Wang whether he thought my impressions were correct. Rather than answering directly, he informed me that the fragrance of An tea was usually likened to the scent of camphor, or sometimes ginseng. All in all, the visit left a deep impression on me. I gained a lot of knowledge and

self-confidence—and became even more infatuated with An tea!

Not long afterwards, an old village leader from Qimen learned that I was researching An tea, so he recommended that I write an article on behalf of Luxi Village, introducing An tea. He also lent me some reading material. It was an issue of a Taiwanese tea magazine called *The Art of Tea: Puerh Teapot,* with a special feature of more than a hundred pages all about An tea. In the colorful and detailed spread of articles, various Taiwanese Chajin evaluated and reflected on An tea. From those pages I learned that this tea variety has many different names: Taiwanese people called it Liu An basket tea; overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia knew it as Anhui Liu An tea, or Hui Qing, or "a distant relative of puerh;"

*Finished Liu An tea waiting to be packaged into baskets.*

people in Hong Kong and Macau called it Anhui Liu An bamboo rain hat tea, or aged Liu An tea, or old Liu An; while people in Southern China sometimes referred to it as "dwarf tea."

Reading all these fascinating stories, so rich in detail, opened my eyes and moved my spirit. I gained a deep appreciation for the influence and appeal that An tea holds in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau. It really represented much more than just a tea—it carried with it a deep sense of history, culture and feeling. I could feel that An tea—with its hundreds of years of history and its warm amber color, its flavor similar to puerh and its profound cultural significance—had the power to soothe my organs, heighten my perception, and move me deeply. With the changing times and the overturning of tradition, the An tea we drink now is both the same and not the same as the An tea of days gone by. The people of An tea's birthplace are very conscious of its cultural significance, and have fought hard to preserve it. I still remember that first article that I wrote to promote An tea—it was written in 1994, for the *Overseas Cantonese News*, and was entitled: "Old Guangdong Leads the Revival of An Tea."

Looking back, those early days of enthusiastically penning articles about An tea were a sort of honeymoon period: as the saying goes, "newborn calves are not afraid of tigers." As I came to understand more about An tea, I started to feel that it was more important to make use of the help of more influential people to promote the tea, so I jumped at any opportunity that came along. In 2002, for instance, the producers of China Central Television Channel 9 wanted to film a documentary about the tea industry in the Huangshan region, called *Tea: the Story of a Leaf*. They invited me to help scout for locations, so I seized the opportunity to recommend An tea, and took one of the production heads to Luxi to interview the bosses of the Sun Yishun and Jiangnan Spring tea factories. Sadly, he told me afterwards that while An tea had its merits, it was too much of a niche variety, and not famous enough, so in the end, the director didn't included it in the final cut. I was deeply disappointed. I felt it should have made it.

In the summer of 2013, the China Tea Expo was held in Hangzhou,

and the boss of the Jiangnan Spring tea factory asked me to find someone to design a leaflet promoting An tea. At the Expo, I got up on stage to speak and piqued the interest of quite a few of the attendees, so I felt somewhat consoled after that. In the winter of that year, Liu Ping, a cultural representative from Anhui's Huaibei City, came to Qimen and fell instantly in love with An tea. After a few initial forays, he came to an agreement to enter into a business partnership with Wang Zhenxiang, the head of the Sun Yishun factory. Mr. Wang would be in charge of production, while Mr. Liu would oversee sales. Mr. Liu soon invited me to write a book about An tea, and offered to take care of the publishing. I thought long and hard about his offer, and decided that, although it was a challenging task, the pressure would also provide good motivation—so, in the end, I gladly agreed, and threw my heart and soul into writing.

I examined materials, I interviewed experts, I pored over ancient records and chatted with Chajin, until finally, after a year of questions, answers, exploration and investigation, I finished my 160,000-word book, entitled *Tracing the Revival of An Tea*. It was printed by the Taihai Publishing House in 2015; I was pleasantly surprised to learn that it was well-received enough to warrant a second print run a year later.

Meanwhile, Mr. Liu was also busy gathering the resources to invite China Radio International's television production center to film an episode of their documentary *Tea Without Borders*, entitled "The Story of An Tea." The documentary covered everything from the story of Mr. Guan Fenfa sending the basket of tea and the letter to Hong Kong, to on-location footage of the relics from the original Sun Yishun tea factory. They filmed the beautiful scenery of Luxi Village, An tea's birthplace, as well as the mysterious manufacturing process and the humble, unassuming people who have handed down this knowledge. They also filmed some scenes re-enacting parts of the traditional process as it would have been in the past, including hand-picking the tea, transporting it down the river by boat, loading and unloading at the docks, and storing the tea in caves—it really was wonderful to have this kind of footage. From the beginning, I was involved with writing the script, and also appeared on screen in the capacity of a scholar—I was very pleased to see it broadcast and to have been part of the experience.

A year later, a documentary film entitled *Tea Bandits* was produced in Hong Kong, and they asked me to look over the script. Around the same time, some people from Shenzhen arrived in Qimen to establish a brand of organic An tea called Chun Ze, and asked me to advise them, which I was happily able to do. Meanwhile, Mr. Liu was throwing his energy into expanding the local market through holding tea tastings to recommend An tea. I, on the other hand, traveled to a number of cities and provinces around China to deliver dozens of lectures about Liu An tea, which received a pleasing reception from audiences.

So, in China, the market was gradually warming up to An tea—but what about overseas? Across the strait, Taiwan had been at the forefront of An tea culture in the past, particularly at the turn of the last century, and had a strong foundation in the study of traditional Chinese culture. So what was the situation regarding An tea in modern-day Taiwan? This was something that I wondered about a lot. In the fall of 2016, the chief editor of the Taiwanese magazine *The Art of Tea: Puerh Teapot*, Ms. Luo Yingyin (羅英銀), came to mainland China on a research trip, together with veteran tea master Mr. Liang Mingzong (梁明宗). I had the good fortune to meet them and ask them a bit about the state of An tea in Taiwan today. However, I found this didn't satisfy my craving to know more—what I really wanted was to go there and find out for myself.

As luck would have it, I received an invitation from the Huangshan Hu Xing Tang Culture Company to visit Taiwan in winter, at the beginning of this year, to do some research. What a heaven-sent opportunity—I was giddy with excitement! From the moment I stepped off the plane, I went into every tea shop I came across, chatted with every Chajin I met, and investigated anything tea-related I saw. Everywhere I went, from Taipei to Yilan, Taiyuan, Nantou and Taichung, I had the chance to immerse myself in the vibrant local atmosphere, and experience for myself the rich tea culture that has grown over the years.

I was delighted to find that in many places I went, the tea sellers not only knew of An tea, but also knew a thing or two about its history. One experience in particular stayed with me: while I was in the city of Taoyuan, I quite fortuitously came across the general director of the Tea Industry Trade Association, Mr. Qiu Guoxiong (邱國雄). Not only did all three members of his family, who were at their store, know of An tea, but they even said they had some old An tea hidden away somewhere in the store, and went straight off to look for it. They searched for nearly half an hour, and even called up one of the staff who had already gone home for the day to ask where the tea was located. I was very moved that they would go through the trouble of searching so tirelessly on my account. When I asked why An tea wasn't available on the Taiwanese market, Mrs. Qiu explained that the Chinese export authorities only allowed puerh to be brought into Taiwan, and hadn't yet permitted the import of other tea varieties. As she spoke, I could sense a hint of sorrow behind her words. In that moment, I finally truly understood the long search for An tea, and the longing that all those Chajin must have felt when this special tea vanished from the market.

When I returned from Taiwan, I continued mulling over An tea and its journey through time. After a half-century of obscurity, tea drinkers in China are once more able to enjoy its rich, enchanting flavor. But as for our tea brothers and sisters across the strait in Taiwan, many of them are still left to dream of An tea. When will its fragrant steam, long separated by time and distance, once again drift across the channel to the beautiful island of Taiwan? I await that day with great anticipation.

*1930s or '40s Liu An Tea. (We aren't sure how old it is.) It tastes like Chinese herbal medicine, especially ginseng. And it has a Qi that knocks you into next week!*

茶禪自修課程

# Tasting Aged Liu An

茶人: *Zhang Yaoyue (張耀月)*

*In 2007, Zhou Yu hosted an opening of a jian of 1930s Liu An. Wu De was fortunate to attend the opening and drinking of that tea. Mr. Zhang writes of that gathering, and explores the flavors of aged Liu An tea, as compared to a modern version like our Tea of the Month. Another obvious comparison is, of course, aged puerh. The old Liu An that was shared in that gathering ten years ago was discovered in a Chinese medicine shop, suggesting that Liu An, more than puerh, was regarded as medicine, especially for digestion.*

Traditional Anhui Liu An basket tea, or Liu An tea (六安茶), is produced in China's Anhui Province. The tea gets its name from the way it's pressed into shape by packing the tea leaves into small baskets woven from bamboo strips and lined with bamboo leaves. This distinctive method of packaging has also given rise to another, quite descriptive name: "Liu An bamboo rain hat tea." Liu An tea is well-loved among overseas Chinese living in the Southeast Asian region.

Liu An tea production halted for a period, beginning around 1940, but thanks to an ever-growing demand from Chinese living abroad, the China Tea Fund was eventually compelled to act. In 1983, they sent a basket of Sun Yishun Liu An tea (one of the most famous brands of old Liu An) to Anhui Province's tea export authorities, along with a letter conveying their sincere hope that Liu An tea production might be revived. As a result, the Qimen (often called "Keemun" in the West, after the Cantonese) Tea Company began a trial production in Liu An's original birthplace: Luxi Village in Anhui's Qimen County.

## *The Medicinal Properties of Liu An Tea*

While Liu An and puerh are both compressed teas, there are substantial differences between their production regions and the raw leaves used, resulting in two teas that are quite distinct in character and mouthfeel. Because of the natural oxidation, the tea leaves often have a whitish-gray tinge, with the unbrewed leaves of a good-quality Liu An displaying a glossy black luster. The brewed leaves are a deep, rusty red color, and the liquor is a strong, clear red. The tea has an aged yet sweet and mellow scent, with a hint of watermelon skin; it has a pleasant flavor and is quite patient. These two factors are probably the most oft-praised characteristics of Liu An: its smooth, lasting flavor and the unique "watermelon skin" note in its aroma.

Liu An tea was highly favored by people in the previous generation in Hong Kong, thanks to its cooling properties and steady nature. It aids with calm and focus, and is generally considered to be gentler and more soothing on the stomach than puerh tea. Aged Liu An is particularly known for its ability to dispel excess heat and dampness from the body, according to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) theory, in which all types of food and drink have "cooling" or "warming" properties. Hong Kong's well-to-do citizens tended to enjoy smoking cigars, so people liked to drink Liu An as an accompaniment—due to its cooling nature, the tea served to eliminate the excess internal heat produced by smoking cigars.

According to the Ming Dynasty *Notes on Tea* by Tu Long (屠隆), "Liu An is a fine tea, and is most effective when used medicinally." Aside from use as an everyday drinking tea, Liu An was frequently used in preparing Chinese medicine by doctors in Southern China and parts of Southeast Asia that were populated by Chinese immigrants. Liu An would be added to the medicine as a "guiding herb," to activate or strengthen the effects of the other ingredients. Liu An tea could also be administered to counteract side-effects of overly strong medicines, and avoid adverse effects on the patient's stomach.

## Late 1940s San Piao Sun Yishun Liu An

# 品時光的標記

These days, of course, it's important to take the advice of a trained doctor as to whether these remedies are still considered effective.

## Mellow, Sweet & Aged: Brewing Liu An Tea

Once you've opened the little bamboo basket and gently taken out the Liu An tea leaves, place them in a clean vessel, free of any scent. Then, take out the bamboo leaves used to line the basket and put one in along with the tea leaves. The brewing method is similar to that of Yunnan puerh, but adding one of the small bamboo leaves into the brewing vessel really allows the unique flavor of Liu An to shine. This is the most popular brewing method in Hong Kong, and produces a distinctive style of tea. The bamboo leaves that are stored along with the tea in Liu An baskets are also said to have healing properties in their own right, such as clearing and soothing the throat, and reducing internal heat. Some tea shops in Hong Kong used to sell the bamboo leaves separately for people to brew as a remedy.

As well as brewing Liu An on its own, you can add some dried orange peel or osmanthus flowers, which both create unique flavor blends. Dried tangerine or orange peel is a commonly used ingredient in Chinese medicine. It improves with aging, which gives rise to its Chinese name, *chenpi* (陳皮), or "aged peel." It's known for its ability to eliminate excess phlegm and dampness, regulate Qi and maintain stomach health.

Osmanthus flower (or *guihua,* 桂花), has warming properties in TCM and is used to dispel cold and promote meridian flow, as well as to transform phlegm and relieve coughing. According to tea sellers, osmanthus is also beneficial for the complexion, so it tends to be popular with female customers. Osmanthus flowers have a full and long-lasting perfume; in the past, osmanthus flowers in Taiwan were most often grown next to tea plantations to enhance the fragrance of the tea. When brewed together with Liu An tea, the two elements make for a gentle and harmonious combination. A faint hint of osmanthus perfume brings out a different feeling in the tea. Because of Liu An's refreshing flavor, a purple-sand teapot is also an excellent choice for a brewing vessel. The coarser texture of the purple-sand clay (*zisha*, 紫砂) allows more air to perforate the pot than other materials, bringing out the clear, refreshing flavor of the tea even more vividly.

## Depth & Elegance: Tasting Liu An Tea

Although Liu An and puerh are both classified as teas that can be aged, they are quite different in character. Liu An is notable for its fresh, clean flavor with a hint of sweetness, and for the purity of its aroma—it echoes the simple, carefree elegance of bamboo. Puerh, on the other hand, is mellow and full-bodied with a lingering flavor. Both varieties have their own admirable qualities and are certainly worth trying.

On October 30th, 2007, a tea session was hosted by well-known Taiwanese tea master Zhou Yu (周渝) along with Luo Yingyin (羅英銀), editor-in-chief of the tea magazine *The Art of Tea: Puerh Teapot.* For the occasion, they opened a basket of San Piao Sun Yishun aged Liu An (三票孫義順). The first few brews displayed some muddled flavors and a slightly astringent feel on the tongue—it wasn't until the eighth or ninth brew that the astringency faded and the various extraneous flavors dissipated. The tea was also quite different after sitting for a while than when it had first been opened—after the leaves had been "woken up," the liquor was much smoother and more lively. After opening the Sun Yishun, Zhou Yu and Luo Yingyin held a second tasting on November 1, once the tea leaves had had a couple of days to re-absorb some moisture. During those days, the weather had also changed from dry to rainy; Zhou Yu remarked that this sort of cool, damp weather was perfect for drinking aged puerh or aged Liu An tea.

After sitting for two days, the aged Liu An was perfectly clear from the very first brew, with none of the muddled flavors of earlier. It's possible those extra flavors were due to the dry weather the first time we tasted the tea. For the second tea tasting, we also switched to using spring water from Wulai District in New Taipei City; according to Zhou Yu, the level of astringency in tea also has to do with water quality. Good quality spring water would reduce the chance of astringency and enhance the intrinsic qualities of the tea. The passing of time, the change in the weather and the choice of water all contributed to creating the ideal meeting of place, time and human spirit, to bring out the deepest nature of the tea.

Aged Liu An embodies a spirit of depth, history and elegance that distinguishes it from the bolder teas made from "big tree" or "*dashu* (大樹)" tea plant varietals; it brings to mind the graceful shapes formed by a dancer in a Kunqu opera. The liquor is fine, sweet and smooth with a delicate mouthfeel and mild, fragrant steam. Most Chajin describe the aroma as having a hint of Chinese medicine or ginseng. It has a cooling, calming effect that gradually spreads throughout the whole body, bringing a feeling of transcendence to the spirit and mind.

Drinking Liu An is beneficial to both one's physical and spiritual health, and helps cultivate a calm and steady spirit. Experienced Chajin know that fine, small, white teacups are the best match for Liu An, to complement the delicate nature of the tea. Carefully sipping small mouthfuls of the gentle tea liquor, it feels as if one is truly drinking in the serenity of the passing time. This is the true beauty and spirit of aged Liu An.

三票孫義順

# Voices from the Hut

# 小亭發聲

*This community is a major part of the experience of Global Tea Hut. Sometimes it may seem like your voice is not meaningful because you're not a tea expert, but you always have a voice here in these pages. And even if you are a beginner, that is the mind of Wisdom: it's worth sharing because many other members here are also just starting their tea journeys, and would love to learn from your experience. Any author chosen for these pages will also receive a free cake of tea, to help encourage more of you to share your ideas on tea and cultvation. So grind some ink and start brushing those characters to share with us all!*

# Shifting Times

**By Sarah Hedden**

Sometimes, the biggest shifts in our world are the hardest to see, announcing themselves in little more than a whisper.

In 2007, a new version of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* was published with some noteworthy additions and some heartbreaking "deletions." It wasn't until January of this year that the full significance of these changes caught the attention of the literary world. Margaret Atwood and nearly thirty other authors, poets and naturalists penned a letter to Oxford University Press urging them to "restore" the lost words.

What follows is a partial list of the "deletions": *acorn, adder, almond, apricot, ash, beech, beetroot, blackberry, blacksmith, bloom, bluebell, boar, bramble, bran, bray, bridle, brook, bullock, buttercup, canary, canter, carnation, catkin, cauliflower, cheetah, chestnut, clover, colt, conker, corgi, county, cowslip, crocus, cygnet, dandelion, drake, doe, fern, ferret, fungus, gerbil, goldfish, gooseberry, gorse, guinea pig, hamster, hazel, hazelnut, heather, heron, herring, holly, horse chestnut, ivy, kingfisher, lark, lavender, leek, leopard, liquorice, lobster, magpie, manger, melon, minnow, mint, mussel, nectar, nectarine, newt, otter, ox, oyster, pansy, panther, parsnip, pasture, pelican, piglet, plaice, poppy, porcupine, porpoise, primrose, prune, radish, raven, rhubarb, sheaf, spaniel, spinach, starling, stoat, stork, sycamore, terrapin, thrush, tulip, turnip, vine, violet, walnut, weasel, willow, wren.*

And here are the words that took their place: *apparatus, allergic, attachment, bilingual, biodegradable, block graph, boisterous, brainy, broadband, bullet point, bungee jumping, cautionary tale, celebrity, classify, chatroom, childhood, chronological, citizenship, colloquial, committee, common sense, compulsory, cope, creep, curriculum, cut and paste, database, debate, democratic, donate, drought, dyslexic, emotion, endangered, Euro, EU, export, food chain, idiom, incisor, interdependent, MP3 player, negotiate, square number, tolerant, trapezium, vandalism, voicemail.*

It's possible to make too much of the publisher's decision, but equally possible to miss its greater significance. Not only are we losing actual species, but we're also losing our ability to talk about the natural world with precision and specificity.

In the beautifully written book *Anam Cara*, Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue describes England's attempt to destroy the Gaelic language as the greatest act of violence against the Irish: "when you steal a people's language, you leave their soul bewildered."

To address the natural world with accuracy is to understand the true significance of what it means to "relate." With words, we strengthen our relationship and connection to the world, seeing the numinous in the ordinary, the other in the self, and the self in the other. Tea can definitely help restore this faculty in us.

And our bewildered souls are desperately in need of meaningful "relating." Again, in the words of John O'Donohue:

"Fashioned from the earth, we are souls in clay form. We need to remain in rhythm with our inner clay voice and longing. Yet this voice is no longer audible in the modern world. We are not even aware of our loss, consequently, the pain of our spiritual exile is more intense in being largely unintelligible."

Recently, I had the privilege of serving tea to twenty graduate students from the Environmental Humanities Department at the University of Utah. The students were engaging, knowledgeable, wise and above all, grief-stricken. They wanted to be of service but feared they didn't have the "courage" to do so—to put themselves in harm's way, to risk persecution, to bear witness, to see the world with open eyes.

It takes courage to keep looking—to see the Animas River and Gold King Mine Spill; the collapse of the waste dam in Minas Gerais, Brazil; the chemical spill in West Virginia; the continued radioactive leak at the Fukushima nuclear complex, etc.

The temptation to look away is strong and well-founded. These are not the sorts of lists I care to make.

Yet, too often, people are either on the side of "science" or that of "spirit." Spiritual seekers frequently fail to engage the world, and those engaging the world often do so without a spiritual practice. Admittedly, I'm wildly overstating the situation, forgetting prominent exceptions (such as the Dalai Lama), and grossly oversimplifying, but I'm doing so intentionally, because I feel that spiritual seekers need the field of action, and the field of action needs spiritual seekers—matter *and* spirit.

With the students—because I had been asked and because they seemed hungry for direction—I shared as richly as I could, grounding them in the power and possibility of their own presence. Such empowerment is needed in the world.

What they left me with was a deeper summons—a haunting and urgent reminder that the world needs our stillness, that we have something to give and that we need to give as generously as possible.

It is a privilege to be a part of this evolving community of Chajin. In the words of Pema Chödrön, "We are needed."

***Recently, Sarah and Wu De began a written correspondence exploring mastery and the rediscovery of our creative capacity as human beings. Those exchanges are published at www.sanctusformandlight.com.***

# Tea & Trauma

**By Alex Scrimgeour**

Many people experience tea as a healing plant, but it is often only tea enthusiasts who are aware of its true healing power. I propose that new findings in the field of mental-emotional trauma reveal another dimension to the healing power of tea, and through collaborative learning and discourse we may all broaden our understanding of both tea and healing.

In my life, I have gradually developed a passion for both tea culture and the healing art of Qi Gong, which in the last five years, I have been teaching alongside each other. I find tea and Qi Gong to be very well suited for one another, just like tea and meditation. My professional background is as an acupuncturist and massage therapist, with a special interest in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and related illnesses. Over the last year, I have been giving monthly tea ceremonies at a residential trauma clinic in Oxfordshire, England, and this has helped me see more clearly into the nature of tea ceremony and healing.

People come to stay at this beautiful clinic in the English countryside for any time between a few weeks and six months. They come to heal themselves and recover from things such as PTSD, anxiety, nervous breakdowns or depression. Often they have been presented with severe and complex traumas, which has made living normally in society impossible. The clinic itself is highly innovative, integrating pioneering body-centered approaches to healing from trauma, including Somatic Experiencing (body psychotherapy), EMDR, equine therapy, yoga and Tai Chi. Trauma very often creates a situation where the nervous system is on constant red-alert and becomes highly sensitive. Because of this, the clinic's primary emphasis is on creating a safe-haven for people to decompress from the pressures of their lives and minds.

Initially, I was asked to teach Qi Gong and lead discussion groups around the general theme of Qi Gong, meditation, Traditional Chinese Medicine and philosophy. However, after the first few sessions, I decided to bring my teaware along and serve tea. The first few discussions had felt more like lectures, which didn't seem to be engaging people that effectively, and so I was hoping that by serving tea I might open up the space for more fruitful dialogue and engagement. The response was very positive, with everyone enjoying the tea, being present and curious through the preparation, and feeling able to communicate and be more open within the group. The participants were noticeably more open and relaxed after the session than before. It was wonderful to witness how different these sessions were—tea truly is a "great connector," a bridge between people, a harmonizing agent between aspects of ourselves and Nature.

Over time, I have started to develop my approach and fine-tune my serving style to the setting. This has been an interesting experience, and not just from witnessing the difference that tea brings to the equation, but also as a way of learning to hone my skills and adapt to different people and dynamics. I believe tea ceremony has a great potential for helping heal and resolve emotional trauma. However, the underpinnings of how it helps heal these sometimes hugely debilitating conditions throws up many questions—where is the healing coming from? The Leaf itself? From me as a guide and server? From the mindfulness and group ritual aspect of the ceremony? As you might guess, all three of these factors are important.

Some people at the clinic have asked, what is special about tea in itself—could the same benefits occur if we were to make gourmet coffee or hot chocolate and share the drinking experience in the same way? Learning to be present and mindful is a powerful tool in healing trauma, and so any activity where we are slowing down and taking time to nourish and care for ourselves is beneficial. However, the tea plant itself has a particular quality that makes it perfect for cultivating mindfulness—it awakens and brightens the mind, but at the same time it brings a calmness which is missing with other dearly loved plants, such as the coffee bean or cacao pod.

If we look back to the first mention of tea historically, we will find it listed as a medicinal herb in the original pharmacopeia of Traditional Chinese Medicine—Shen Nong's *Herbal Classic*. Its therapeutic quality is described simply as "brightening the eyes." This is symbolic language: the eyes are considered the prime diagnostic windows into the health of the mind. Although the Leaf contains a myriad of preventative health benefits, I believe this primary function of "brightening the eyes" offers curative potential as well. If we are actively using mindfulness techniques for self-healing, tea can be a hugely valuable support in this process—it nourishes our ability to stay awake, present and concentrated. It is also interesting to note that one of the key diagnostics that can be noticed in someone who has suffered overwhelming trauma is seen in the eyes, which sometimes seem as if they are veiled, hidden or frozen.

In England we have a very strong tea tradition, and it is common knowledge that any disputes between people or personal crises are best solved by first "making a nice cup of tea." So it is already a given that tea can act as a healing agent in social disharmony. However, what is being more and more acknowledged in the trauma field is how important the social realm is for individual health and healing.

One of the most exciting discoveries of the last few decades was made by the neuroscientist Stephen Porges,

*“I believe tea ceremony has a great potential for helping heal and resolve emotional trauma. However, the underpinnings of how it helps heal these sometimes hugely debilitating conditions throws up many questions—where is the healing coming from? The Leaf itself? From me as a guide and server? From the mindfulness and group ritual aspect of the ceremony? As you might guess, all three of these factors are important.”*

when he realized that there is another layer to our nervous system, which is critical in the stress response. His research intersects psychology, neuroscience and evolutionary biology, and has come to be called "Polyvagal Theory."

Most people are familiar with the "flight or fight" and "freeze" responses. These are instinctual mechanisms that are evolutionarily embedded into our autonomic nervous systems (ANS). When people experience trauma and are unable to process and recover from the experience, this leads the nervous system to go haywire, which becomes confused and highly sensitive—in what is termed as a "dysregulated nervous system."

The ANS is often seen as being balanced like two sides of a scale—when we are under physical or mental stress, the sympathetic aspect of the ANS is stimulated, and when we are relaxed, eating, and sleeping, the parasympathetic aspect of the ANS is stimulated. The two modes create a cascade effect through our hormonal systems, metabolism and blood circulation. Simply put, the sympathetic speeds things up and the parasympathetic slows things down. For optimal healing and regeneration, we are dependent on the parasympathetic. The nerve pathway which governs the parasympathetic is called the "vagus nerve." This stems from the lower aspect of our face and jaw, and runs down through our throat and innervates the organs of our trunk.

Polyvagal Theory highlights that the vagus nerve has two distinct branches: one that is slower and older, and another that is newer and faster. The old branch is activated in the "freeze" response; it's kind of like a default automatic shutdown when stress becomes overwhelming. This is an effective survival mechanism that is seen when an animal "plays dead"—the predator loses interest and instinctively avoids dead meat for its own safety. This happens exactly the same in humans. We faint or we "dissociate" from the body, numbing us to terror and pain. The newer branch of the Vagus is distinct to higher mammals and is specifically related to social communication. We are using this part of the nervous system instinctively all the time, in any environment when we're reading others' facial expressions or hearing their voices. This represents a new layer to the stress response—the orientation mode.


The reason why the orientation mode is so vital for humans is linked to our vulnerability throughout our infancy. Unlike many animals, we're entirely dependent on our caretakers and have evolved to use facial expression and voice as an essential bonding (and survival) skill. Even more importantly, this skill is integral to functioning socially and is also essential for our physical and mental health. Polyvagal Theory teaches us that we are constantly regulating each other's health just by conversing and reading facial expressions. When there is the slightest sign that the person we are with is detecting danger, our orientation mode picks up on this and, depending on our conditioning, kicks into the sympathetic "flight or fight" mode. When our environment and the people we are with appear safe and at ease, we are also safe and at ease, and our nervous system remains in a balanced state. In time, this understanding will be hugely significant for modern healthcare—optimal healing is dependent on a safe social and physical environment, and diminishing signs of threat and danger.

When we experience a traumatic event, our bodies have an inbuilt, evolutionary resilience that helps us survive and regain equilibrium. However, our culture and modern lifestyles have changed so rapidly in recent centuries that often it is very difficult to regain equilibrium after trauma, and our nervous systems are left in a

deregulated, overly sensitized state. Stress has become so pandemic in our society that we actually don't even need a single traumatic event to knock the nervous system out of balance: the gradual buildup of physiological, emotional, social and environmental stress can be thought of as "soft trauma." Whenever we reach breaking point (i.e., when it becomes overwhelming), this can manifest in similar ways to "hard trauma"—anxiety, depression, pain and dissociation.

This way of looking at the underlying mechanisms of social interaction and stress gives us new insight into why tea ceremony can be such a powerful and sometimes profound experience for some people—there are multiple levels at work.

If you have engaged in a harmonious tea ceremony, you know in your heart and understand all of this already. Nevertheless, if we broaden our knowledge, this can empower and give more clarity to our intent, leading to more skillful interaction with tea and those whom we serve.

If you are already engaged in tea ceremony, this research and new understanding of stress and trauma will help dispel any doubt that the way you communicate, through speech or body language and facial expression, is vital to creating harmony and healing through tea. Polyvagal Theory gives credence to the old Chinese saying that "the doctor *is* the medicine." This goes to re-emphasize how important self-cultivation and meditation is for doctors and for self-healing. When you have a bright-hot charcoal ember and a log of wood is placed close by, the dry log will spark up into a blaze. This is an analogy for when a healer's spiritual Light is clear and strong; just being in their presence can activate healing and change.

A different line of research that gives further weight to this concept is that of the HeartMath Institute, which clearly shows that when a state of mental-physical coherence is achieved in one person, this spontaneously arises in those who are close by. The process by which this coherence is developed is a simple method of breathing slowly whilst resting a peaceful awareness on the area of the heart, focusing on the changes in that area.

The heart's electromagnetic field becomes coherent with that of the brain, and this field extends out from the body and "entrains" those who are close by. It might seem far-fetched, but this process of coherence and entrainment can be clearly measured.

The first step when working with either "soft" or "hard" trauma is analogous to the first step of Qi Gong: "gathering the Qi." This simply means slowing down, centering, creating a safe environment, grounding and setting an intention. When we can start to cultivate mindfulness and remain present in the moment-to-moment and in the body, then we have built the stability of mind to take the next step in beginning to process and release old patterns and traumas without getting knocked off balance and re-traumatized.

When mindfulness slips and stability is lost, it can either fall towards the sympathetic mode of speeding up, becoming restless or anxious, or towards parasympathetic dissociation, which is a spaced-out, disembodied, dreamy state. Through practice, we can become familiar with this spectrum of experience and learn to self-regulate, and set the stage for our own healing or help co-regulate and assist others in this process. When tea is combined with simple mindfulness and embodiment practices, it offers a strong support to begin taking these first steps. It is also interesting to note that the sensitivity skills that are developed when drinking tea are superb embodiment exercises in themselves, as the main pathway of the Vagus nerve runs from the face, down through the throat, and into the core of the body.

When I first began serving tea at the clinic, I was unsure what would be the ideal tea to serve and the most suitable method of preparation. Initially, I served GABA oolong tea, white tea or aged white tea, as I wanted to avoid teas that might be too stimulating and potentially agitating. This worked well, but since then I've come to realize that the main factor in avoiding agitation is actually not the tea type, but the quality of the leaf. As such, organic *living* tea is key for healing and good health. Because I never know in advance how many people might turn up to the sessions, I've learned that it's best to come prepared for either gongfu, if there are a handful of people, or for bowl tea if there are more. Being spontaneous allows me to attend fully to those around me, rather than relying on a fixed plan for how I would like things to go. This is surely a valuable life lesson in these changeable times.

When assessing what type of tea might be appropriate for someone, it is helpful to think back to the spectrum of experience mentioned earlier. If people seem agitated, restless and leaning towards sympathetic dominance, we could consider this as an excess Yang state of being, and conversely, if people seem dissociated, spaced-out and not rooted in their body, this could be seen as an excess Yin state of being. We can then adjust both our behavior and the tea we serve to harmonize with the group. Teas that accent the surface qualities of color, fragrance and taste can help harmonize the Yang, while teas that accent the deeper qualities of texture, throat-feel, body-feel and Qi can help harmonize the Yin. Our attention can also be specifically drawn to these qualities in any particular tea, as no tea is definitively Yin or Yang.

When aiming to create harmony within a group, I believe we can learn from the Daoist wisdom of being like water. Rather than projecting or enforcing any state of mind through our space, we yield to what is around us and accept what is. We can see if we can release ourselves to the stillness in the room, or release into our breath and listen for the stillness in the background of our body. Ideally, we rest in a state of embodied presence and coherence. If we feel safe and at home in ourselves, this will help create an environment of safety for others. The heaviness that often surrounds people who are stressed can be counteracted by generating a sense of lightheartedness within, and radiating this through one's voice and expression.

I continue to be fascinated by all aspects of tea practice, and by its particular relevance and helpfulness in modern times. The old wisdom that runs like gold through the history of Cha Dao and through the indigenous traditions of the East, holds incredible potential for the healthcare crisis that is unfolding in modern society. It is up to us to draw together new ways of applying these old traditions and adapting to changing times.

穿過茶碗熱氣我們發現療癒的力量

# In the Flow

**By Rivo Sarapik**

The most powerful tea session of my life (so far) happened accidentally and with grace. Who would have known? The road to amazement was paved with disappointment, though... "Nope, there's nothing here to work with," slipped from my mouth. Another Chajin, Andrus, and I are standing in front of a puddle of water in the middle of the forest. Our feet are a bit wet from the hike. It's autumn and red-yellow-orange leaves cover the forest floor. Temperatures barely reach zero degrees Celsius at this time of the year in Estonia.

We had a plan: to fetch water from a spring and drink some tea next to it, in the wild. Only the spring looks more like a swamp (due to the heavy rainfall this week), with no place to stand and reach the surface of the water or see where the water reaches the ground. The shores are wet, eager to swallow you into the water as soon as you step close to them. We'd need wetsuits to fill our water tanks. *Sigh*.

"Let's go. Nothing to do here!" We nod to each other and start our hike out of the woods. The road back to the car is silent. It has been raining for a couple of days now and the week has been busy for us both. The prospect of fresh water, as well as a nice meditation to quiet the mind while drinking tea outdoors, has been filling my head with anticipation all week. The vision is fading now, though.

The GPS in the car offers a soothing: "There's another spring not that far." An hour of extra driving takes us to Nõmmeveski. This time we are lucky. A good soul had built a small pipe for the water to flow so others could easily access it.

We carry our equipment: canisters for water, a teapot, a couple of bowls and something to sit on. There's a river flowing nearby. It sounds quite loud, painted brown as the water rushes past the path, carrying mud and silt with it.

We fill the canisters and then lay down a blanket and sit down. I take off my gloves and put them on my feet to warm them. I take out the pot, bowls and the, setting them up, while the kettle starts heating on the gas stove. I realize it's going to take a while for the water to reach boiling point.

I stop and breathe for a moment, and then the magic happens... It's crisp outside, but the sound of the river flowing by has caught both of us in its magical music-current. Within minutes, we are in a state of meditation, without the slightest pressure or struggle (yes, it sometimes happens). With just us, there is no pressure or nervousness in being the one serving tea.

The sound of the water resonates deeply, with a commensurate relaxation growing inside me. Not a single thought passes by—just the feeling of flow and clarity, taking everything unnecessary away with the silt the stream carries to the distant sea. *Total bliss*.

We just sit there, eyes closed. Meditating. Focusing on the breath and on our inner world.

It takes almost an hour for the water to reach boiling point. Usually, it would be awkward, making people wait for that long. Not here. I have surrendered to it, lost in the tale of the river. By his relaxed face, I can see Andrus has succumbed to it, as well.

I have Light Meets Life shou puerh with snow chrysanthemum to drink on this day. I break a small piece, rinse it, and start steeping and sharing it. What follows is a bit blurry... Brewing and serving just kind of happens—it's me working with the tea, but I'm not thinking about what I'm doing. I'm not fixated on what to do next (has it steeped long enough, is the water hot enough, etc.). Everything just flows and works out on its own. Every bowl is magnificent—just right.

Finally, it starts to snow a little bit and we return to our bodies, directing the focus from the inner flow to physical sensations. It's getting cold. Time to head back.

We've been listening to the song of the river for almost three hours by this time. As we walk further away, the sound of the water detaches from our souls. Suddenly, we reach silence and it feels strange. It's like the flow has just stopped and shaken us awake from a dream. Then a car rushes by, and the sound of the engine works as an alarm clock. We arrive back in the world, not sure where we went but feeling calm, nonetheless. These kinds of situations remind me of three things:

*First: Always keep a "beginner's mind."*

Be open to what's about to come and cherish what you have. Sitting in Nature by a river sounds like something all too simple. Why even mention it? I did that often when I was a child. But it's really never the same experience. I have changed, the circumstances have changed and every moment is different. The variations presents themselves when our minds are open and present.

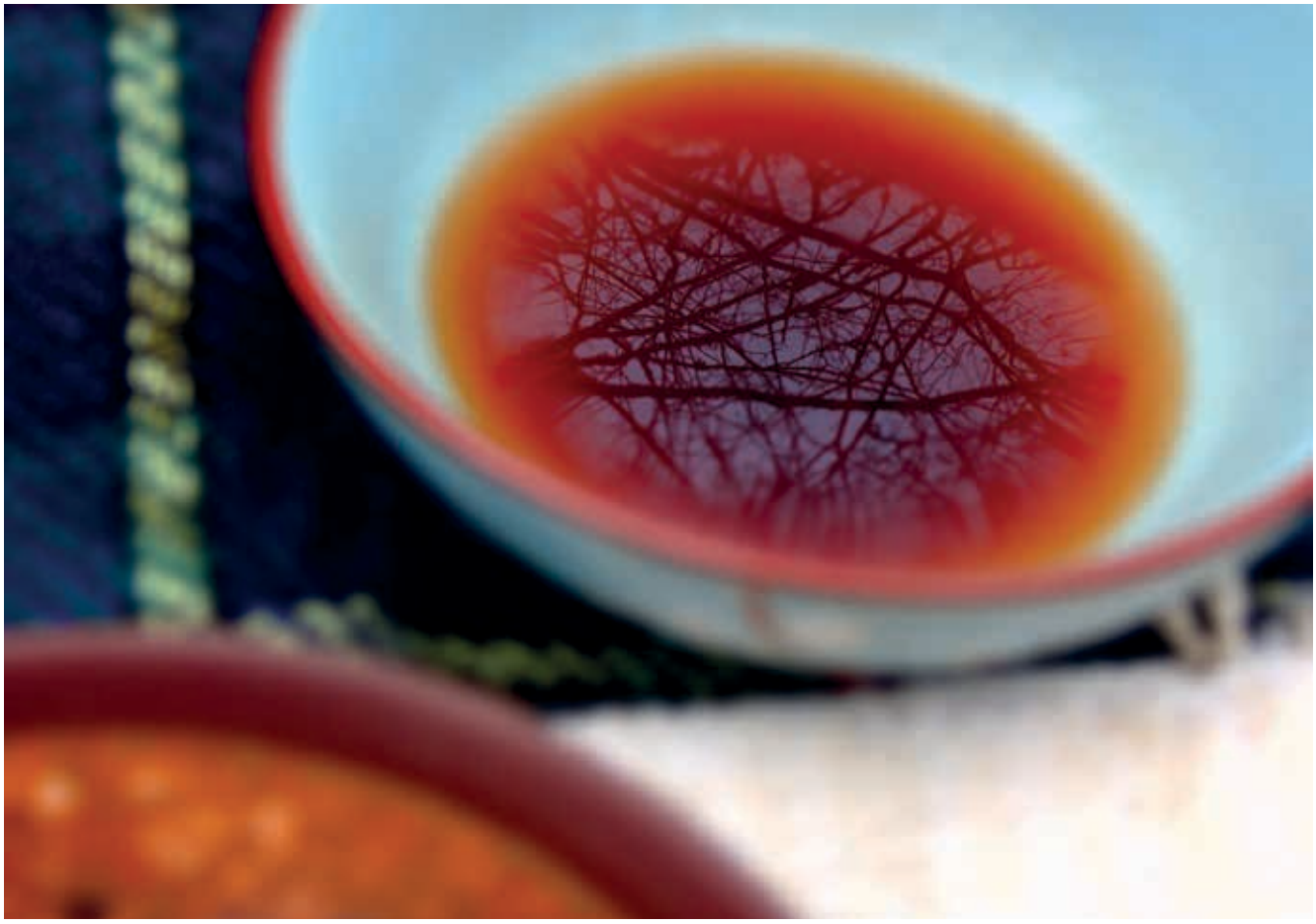
*Second: It's wise to skip judgment.*

Whether what's happening is good or bad is not really important. It's egoistical to share my opinion about things. Sometimes things don't work out the way you planned, but getting stuck in judgment can stop good things from happening. Regret is a waste of both time and energy. Head for the solution first, and then see what happens. Something always will.

*Third: Nature knows and works best.*

It's easy to forget the connection with Nature we all have while living in an urban environment. We are not only surrounded by Nature, we *are* Nature. We are part of it. This reminds me that the experiences offered by a short trip out into Nature are everyday necessities: silence, darkness at night and light during the day, a calm mind, deeper breathing, clean water, sleep, etc. Tea offers us the space to remember and notice these things.

When drinking tea indoors, there are always details to consider—the chaxi, music, incense and so on. It's different outside, as Nature takes care of all this and you can focus on the basics: serving tea and your guests, and, more importantly, just being.



# Tea Wayfarer

*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 Elina Naan.*

It is very common these days for people to forget about their dreams. Life takes over and suddenly you realize that the life you are living isn't very lively and maybe hasn't been for a while... Well, that's what happened to me.

But when 2012 arrived, everything changed within a minute. And I mean *everything* (and really within one minute). The way I felt in my own skin, the way I saw the world and even the way the world saw me, all changed. I was suddenly happy and free. I was myself. But the journey had just begun, and there was still a lot to sort out. Since you are reading this, I'm sure you all know what the catalyst for this change was.

One day when I walked into the local teashop to buy bowls for my friend, I stayed there for a while, chatting. When I was leaving, I heard they were looking for a little extra help in the shop. I offered myself. At that time, I had been working as a director at the Estonian National Television for seven years, and it was quite bizarre for me to go work in a teashop. Instead of giving orders, I was of service at the shop and studying the Leaf. It was a transition, and has been a deep journey in getting to know myself. I want to share my love and gratitude to Steve Kokker, who has opened the tea-door to so many of us here in Estonia.

It is almost impossible to put into words how much Tea has taught me. For me, She is the most honest and greatest of teachers. She is so uplifting, gentle and safe medicine. At the same time, She's selflessly sincere, deep, humble and open. Tea knows the way from heart to heart and I'm so thankful that I have chosen this time and space to learn from Her, by serving.

I have been holding weekly tea gatherings in Tallinn and all around Estonia since 2013. Feminine circles are close to my heart. Tea, with all the elements, brings so much comfort and unites people who have chosen to sit together. Every time I raise a bowl, I am amazed at how this sacred liquid knows all the little cracks and crevices that we have inside us, and gently fills us with wisdom and insights, and deep affections, while bringing us back to our center. And while holding the circle-bowl, you can feel how, even in silence (or especially when in silence) we become one—one love.

Does this sound too esoteric or a little peculiar? I would guess not to you, because you have felt the same

Elina Naan

and that's why you love the Way of Tea—even if you use different words to express the sentiments of a tea ceremony. It might sound too easy or maybe too impossible to some people, but that is why I feel it is important to really change the world bowl by bowl (this expression is golden), because the world *is* changing bowl by bowl. I am so thankful and happy to be a part of this tea family and part of this world we are living in—serving tea, learning, growing, trusting this journey of ours and loving every moment of it…

If you feel like getting to know a bit more of my doings, you may take a look at my website. And, of course, when coming to Estonia, please join me for a bowl of tea.

**www.kuuruum.com**

# Inside the Hut

## Coming Soon to Global Tea Hut Magazine

茶主题: *Qimen Red Tea*

茶主题: *Classics of Tea: Ming Dynasty*

茶道

茶主题: *Chajin Stories/Biographies*

茶主题: *2017 Annual Trip*

*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!*

*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!*

*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!*

*We are offering free Light Meets Life cakes to authors whose submissions are accepted in Global Tea Hut. Let us know if you are interested! Also let us know if there are any topics you want to see in future issues.*

*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.*

*There are still a few open spaces for this year's Annual Global Tea Hut Trip to Anhui. If you are interested in learning more about the itinerary or want to fill out an application, check the website for details.*

*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*

## March Affirmation

***This is my practice.***

*Am I willing to face whatever comes through the door? This is my life, as it is. There is always room for gratitude. And there is always the chance to orient towards growth, facing whatever life puts before me as fuel for my growth.*

## Center News

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

We have made a lot of effort to solidify the schedule and experience at the Center, including creating a curriculum and taking steps towards the course schedule that will define Light Meets Life when it is built.

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 Sept. 12th.

**www.globalteahut.org**

*The most informative 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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