

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

December 2017

LIU BAO

六堡

HISTORY, PROCESSING & LORE





MA BAO

We are excited to begin a new holiday tradition of sharing a finer tea by combining the tea and gift budgets. This year, we once again turn to the small town of Liu Bao, connecting Liu Bao, Malaysia and Taiwan to the whole world through this beautiful black tea for the holidays and to toast the New Year!

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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By Peng Qing Zhong (彭慶中)

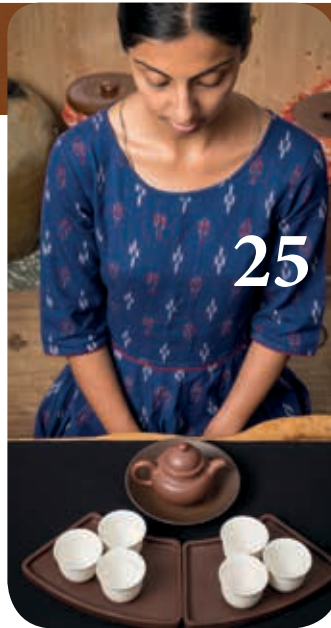
29 HISTORY OF LIU BAO

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41 PROCESSING OF LIU BAO

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**All of these articles are by the same author because we have translated them from his seminal work A Record of Liu Bao, which is the world's largest and most exhaustive book on Liu Bao. Once again, we also set records, as this issue is the largest, most in-depth work on Liu Bao in English!*



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From the Editor

In December, Taiwan starts to get cool and we find ourselves drinking lots of post-1980s Liu Bao, aged sheng puerh and shou puerh to start warming the belly. The lunches at the Center start to move away from raw food and there is an increase of soups, stews and other warming foods. The holidays always bring cheer, as the Center closes this month as we do some necessary cleaning, take trips to teach and spread the word and celebrate the holidays in our own way. This is a time for the Center to rest, for us to drink some nice teas and prepare for a new year of courses, greeting some of you in the coming year.

This month, Shen and I will be traveling to Malaysia to attend a tea expo, where I will speak on Wuyi cliff tea, and we will hand out a big pile of magazines and free tea tins. This is the first effort in our new campaign to get to 10,000 members by 2020 and build Light Meets Life. Many of you know that we have been working in that direction for years, but the new spark of inspiration and motivation is coming from some new members who are helpful, active and full of fresh ideas. For me personally, I am quite happy with the Center as it is now, and content with the abundance already in our lives. I know that one day, when Light Meets Life is built, we will be sitting around in that bigger Center reminiscing about the small one we are in now. For that reason, I always look on the Center with gratitude and precious love. What motivates me to build is not a desire for more, which will inevitably mean more work, but the fact that our courses are full with waiting lists. It never feels good to turn people away. Chajin waiting for courses inspires me to build Light Meets Life! So let's work together and build the world's biggest and best free Tea Center, with the prayers and intention that this school will outlive us all, teaching many generations of Chajin to come!

Since we sent out the "10kx2020" pamphlet, many of you have emailed asking how you can help if you are not qualified for one of the positions we are filling (PR and photography/videography). Of course, the easiest way you can help out is to help spread the word about Global Tea Hut to your friends, especially after you share tea and even on social media. Also, another big service would be if you email us the names and links of blogs, podcasts, YouTube channels and other resources you enjoy. You don't need to know the content creator personally. Just email GTH10kx2020@gmail.com with the names of blogs or journals you read, channels you watch or podcasts you listen to, and our new PR spokesperson will get in touch with them, offering a free month of Global Tea Hut. We hope to increase the amount of coverage we have and do more interviews with interesting hosts, in an effort to spread the word about this amazing community.

We also want you to know that as Global Tea Hut increases in size, we will continue to invest in improving the experience, including more journalism and travel issues, which also means new and exciting teas and tea regions covered in future issues. We plan to make an effort to cover and share yellow tea, white

tea from Fu Ding in Fujian Province, Dancong oolong from Phoenix Mountain, more Japanese teas and translations of Japanese tea texts, as well as more Korean teas and translations. We also want to work on improving the app and completely redoing the "Past Issues" section of the site, converting the whole thing to a searchable, linkable html page instead of pdf files.

Finally, this month marks the beginning of a special, new tradition in Global Tea Hut. If you have been hunting around in your envelope looking for a gift, wait a minute, because there isn't one—or, rather, the gift is a very special kind. Starting this year, we plan to celebrate the holidays every December by using the gift budget to increase the quality of the tea we send in December. In other words, we take our tea budget and increase it by one gift for all of you and then reach for a higher shelf! This year is extra special. The last few years we have focused on Liu Bao tea in December, which we wanted to continue in 2017, so we headed down to Malaysia to talk to Henry and Master Lin. We told Henry about our new tradition of adding the gift budget to the tea budget to get a better tea, and amazingly, he offered to match us dollar for dollar, donating half of this month's tea. What this means is that this month's tea is one of the highest quality we have ever sent out in Global Tea Hut: an early- to mid-90s Malaysian-stored Liu Bao! And, we have translated some chapters from the most important book on Liu Bao in Chinese, written by local Liu Bao expert Peng Qing Zhong (彭慶中), which makes this an exciting month indeed!



茶道 FURTHER READINGS

This month, we recommend taking the time to read through the December 2016 and 2015 issues, especially the Tea of the Month articles. They both cover many aspects of Liu Bao we won't delve into so deeply in this issue, including the relationship between Liu Bao tea and Malaysia, which is covered in greater depth in the 2016 issue.

TEA OF THE MONTH



Over the course of this month, we will once again man the turrets, hoist the sable flags and return to the “Six Castles.” Liu Bao tea is one of our favorite teas, and always has been. In this issue, we plan to review the processing history of this amazing black tea, and discuss the history and geography of Liu Bao in Guangxi, China. Since we mostly drink aged Liu Bao, it’s important to understand the history of the place and the various processing methods used over time so we understand the Liu Bao teas we enjoy. This is especially true since the differences in processing were relatively extreme (but all within black tea processing) and create very different flavors depending on the vintage of Liu Bao you have. And we have one of the most stunning teas to enjoy as we explore Liu Bao this month, courtesy of our new tradition of using the gift budget to get a better tea in December, which was so generously matched by our dear friend Henry Yiow (邱順昌).

Since this is the third year in a row where Henry has donated tea to this community, we thought we would share his story with you, and then sit down and discuss some of the changes in Liu Bao tea drinking in Malaysia, offering the perspective of twenty-five years of experience. Henry was born in Guantan in the Year of the Rooster, 1969 (this is his year). He has been

a lifelong and very devout Buddhist, as were his parents. He is one of the best vegetarian chefs on the planet, and makes the best curry we have ever tried. It should come as no surprise then that he was once a vegetarian chef, worked at a wholesale factory for vegetarian products and even made soy milk at some point. Henry had a lifelong love of bonsai trees, and though the hobby has been overshadowed by tea, he still loves them today. At a Chinese cultural expo in Guantan, which had sections for bonsai, geomancy and even tea, he met a mutual friend, Camellia, who eventually introduced him to his tea teacher. He was in love right from the start and dreamed of the day he could start a tea shop.

Very soon, Henry devoted part of his shop to tea, which slowly took over and became his livelihood. You can still see Henry’s love of Nature, Buddhism, cooking and fine tea in his tea shops today, even though they have developed a lot over the decades he has been sharing tea. People gather at Henry’s shop to drink fine tea, eat some nice food and share in community together. He is one of the kindest and most generous Chajin we have ever met, running an old-school tea shop where you can always have a cup and a nice meal. He is a dear brother, and is aligned with so much of the values we promote in this Global Tea Hut: healthy diet, clean

and chemical-free tea, generosity and a love for kindness shared through tea.

Henry isn’t just behind some of the best teas we’ve shared in Global Tea Hut, he is also an important teacher to us. He has taught us much of what we know about tea, tea history, brewing and appreciation. Much of what we have shared with you over the past years is wisdom we learned from Henry Yiow. And since Malaysia is the capital of Liu Bao, and he has decades of experience appreciating, aging and learning about Liu Bao tea, we sat Henry down for a discussion about the changes in Liu Bao tea over the years—both in the tea itself and in the way it has been appreciated.

We started our talk with the history of Liu Bao in Malaysia. When the British controlled Malaysia, they developed the peninsula with plantations and tin mines. The tin mines were amongst the richest ever found on earth. They brought workers from their other territories to work here: mostly Indians to work the plantations and Chinese to work the mines. The Chinese, including Henry’s ancestors, came mostly from Guangdong and other southern provinces. Malaysia is hot and humid, even more so than their home in southern China. And the deep tin mines are even hotter and damper! The extreme weather and dangers of mining claimed many lives.



Ma Bao (馬堡)



Liu Bao, Guangxi, China



1990s Liu Bao Black Tea



Han Chinese



~500 Meters



Puerh Versus Liu Bao

Puerh and Liu Bao can seem very similar, especially shou and Liu Bao. The differences are many, though. First, shou liquor is usually darker and much thicker than Liu Bao, which is more maroon in color and much more watery. Shou is thick and dark brown. Liu Bao tastes famously of betel nut flowers, is smoother and often tastes like pine smoke (from the processing). Aged sheng puerh tastes often of Chinese herbs, ginseng, camphor and orchids, while shou tastes of leather,

mushrooms and an autumn forest. Liu Bao and other black teas often have a slightly metallic aftertaste due to the fact that they use a lot of larger leaves (huang pian, 黄片). However, shou or aged sheng with lots of larger leaves (that were on the tree longer) may share this flavor. In flavor, aroma and energy, Liu Bao is much more even and smooth and puerh is a lot more vibrant and full. Liu Bao has soft and steady energy, whereas puerh is pulsing with life, as it comes from such environs.

When you are drinking both side by side, you can pay attention to how thick the liquor is, moving it around in your mouth to feel the viscosity. Smell the dry leaves and the empty cup after drinking and see if there is a pinewood aroma or a metallic aftertaste, both of which will let you know that you have a Liu Bao instead of a puerh. If the tea is cooling or with a smoother, softer energy, then that is another sign you are drinking a Liu Bao. Puerh should be bold in flavor and energy.

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They mined the tin with little to no machinery in the beginning. The Chinese in Guangdong already had a tradition of drinking Liu Bao tea to expel heat and dampness from the body, so the workers turned to this medicine to prevent illness. There are even reports of miners who would refuse to work for a mining company that did not provide Liu Bao tea to its workers.

As we will discuss later, the processing of Liu Bao changed in the 1980s—influenced by the burgeoning production of shou puerh, which was ironically developed based on Liu Bao processing methods—which also changed its nature in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Most post-1980s Liu Bao is warming, and therefore nice to drink in the winter, due to deeper, wetter piling in the artificial fermentation. This tea can be nice in the summer, and offers a slight cooling effect, but it is much less pronounced than traditionally processed Liu Bao, which is quite cooling, bringing a rising breeze that sweeps up the body, and famously from Lu Tong’s “under the arms.”

Eventually, the mining companies realized that since Liu Bao tea was aged, and the older the better, without any expiration date, buying in bulk would save the company large amounts of money over time. It would be like a large office in which the management was obligated to provide coffee to every one of its employees every day. Eventually, the management would realize that a storeroom full of coffee and coffee supplies purchased in bulk would save the company thousands of dollars over the course of a year. The mining companies came to the same conclusion and built large warehouses to store what would eventually become literal tons of Liu Bao tea. As a result, a tremendous amount of Liu Bao started to make its way to Malaysia, and companies were formed to facilitate the exportation of Liu Bao from China to Hong Kong, and then on to Malaysia, with branches in Hong Kong, Penang and Ipoh.

After the Cultural Revolution in the ‘60s and ‘70s, the already undervalued tea dropped again in price. The reason

that Liu Bao was packaged in fifty-kilogram baskets to begin with was that the price was so low that such quantities were needed for it to be marketable! As some of you who have visited the Center or attended our annual trips know, tea is a very labor-intensive agricultural product. Usually, after much hard work, the dried leaf weighs one-fourth or -fifth of when it was picked, so it would take around 200 kilograms of harvested leaves to make a basket of Liu Bao! In the 1970s and 1980s, the price of tin fell and the mines in Malaysia started to close up, which, of course, had a powerful influence on the Liu Bao industry as well. Eventually, the import/export companies were forced to close, and the drying of the market eventually hit Guangxi as well. Farmers could expect far more money for a kilogram of vegetables than Liu Bao tea (and for less work). Liu Bao tea production essentially stopped in the 1980s, with only a few producers left. Sadly, many of the old-growth trees were even torn up to be replaced by vegetable and rice farms.

Back in Malaysia, the mines were closing and the tons of Liu Bao were left aging—sold off to the highest bidder or kept by the owners of the mines. By that time, Liu Bao had made its way into the heart of Chinese culture in Malaysia. Henry told me that back in the day, Liu Bao tea was everywhere: in restaurants, shops and the homes of all Malaysian Chinese who had realized that Liu Bao wasn't just medicinal for miners working deep underground, but was also pleasant to drink in the humid heat of Malaysia, especially before air-conditioning. In those days, Henry told me, communities were much stronger than today. "You didn't just pay money at the grocers—you had a family tab. And every time you went to get some groceries, you would share a few cups of tea with the owner, who you knew as a friend. His children played with yours and called him 'uncle,' after all... everything was like that back then. You drank tea with everyone, from the shop where you bought prayer supplies, like incense and ghost money, to the Chinese doctor—at the temple and in the parks, in a dim sum restaurant... Everywhere, Chinese people drank tea together, and it was most often Liu Bao tea, which suits the climate and is therefore our favorite tea, even nowadays..." Since aged Liu Bao was very abundant and cheap, there was plenty of great tea to go around and share—much more tea than could be drunk at the time. But that changed in the late 1990s.

With the puerh boom, the prices of aged Liu Bao began to rise and tea lovers throughout Malaysia slowly began to realize they were sitting on a gold mine, which could be sold to Mainland Chinese. Following the market, more and more Liu Bao started to make its way back where it came from—a trend which continues even now. Henry told me that tea merchants like him must sell some tea to China. "As prices have risen, Malaysian Chinese who got used to drinking Liu Bao for cheap every day are not willing to pay the market value for such tea. But the Mainland Chinese are very enthusiastic about vintage tea like this, offering much more... Still, we make an effort to preserve as much Liu Bao in Malaysia as we can." We told Henry that when we started drinking aged teas in the '90s and early 2000s,

we often facetiously referred to Liu Bao as "poor man's puerh," since it was a very cheap alternative to aged puerh. Henry said that even though Liu Bao is much more expensive than it used to be, when you could get a fifty-kilogram basket for just hundreds of dollars, it is still relatively cheap, since a kilogram of 1950s Liu Bao costs a fraction of what a similarly aged puerh cake would cost, and the puerh is only 300 grams! "Also," he exclaimed with a smile, "you can look at it from another perspective, which is that Liu Bao tea was grossly undervalued back in the day, so much so that the farmers had to quit producing it. As a tea lover who loves Liu Bao tea above all other teas, I think the value of the tea is closer to what it is actually worth these days, though I do miss the days when well-aged Liu Bao was abundant everywhere." To some extent, Henry keeps those traditions alive, serving plenty of aged Liu Bao to his guests with the same kind smile that shines with a heart raised in those tight-knit communities where everyone knew everyone, and tea was the social lubricant that brought people together, shared freely and purely from the heart. No matter the cost of the tea, we should all strive to share it in this way. After all, even the best teas on our shelves are for sharing eventually.

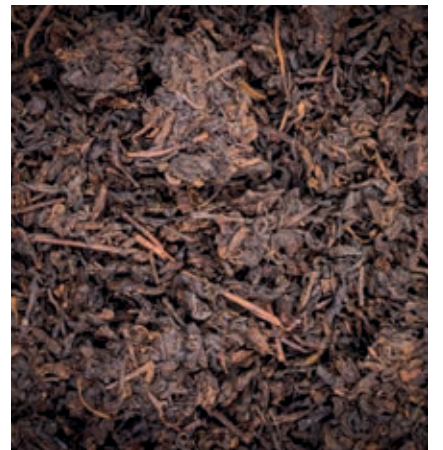
Liu Bao's history as medicine and then hospitality in the Malaysian Chinese community makes it a paragon of the history of all tea: used to facilitate well-being and to bring people together in friendship and kindness. Henry embodies these virtues and teaches them with his way of living, which is the best kind of lesson there is. And this month, all of us can bask in that generosity, as he matched Global Tea Hut dollar for dollar, which has afforded us the opportunity to share a very special Malaysian-stored Liu Bao from the 1990s. It is one of our favorite teas, and we are so happy we will all be drinking it around the world over the course of the holidays!

Wherever you are in the world, please raise a cup to our brother Henry Yiow. May he be abundant, happy and healthy. We have deep and heartfelt gratitude for all he has taught us over the years, not to mention the extreme generosity that has allowed us to share so many teas with you!



茶 *This great Malaysian-stored Liu Bao is very special. Henry opened a basket just for all of us, sharing this special tea with all of us for the holidays. This is the real spirit of tea: leaves, water and heat shared freely between spirits, as kindness and friendship, rather than business. Tea should be full of such love, as this month's surely will be for us all.*

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THE BEST LIU BAO VINTAGES

The best Liu Bao teas of all time, according to Henry and Master Lin, who have more experience than anyone we know, are 1950s “Joy to the World,” Pu Tian Gong Qing (普天共庆), which was a higher grade of Liu Bao reserved for the managers and owners of the mines; 1970s Shuang Xing Hao Yin (双星号印 / SSHC Penang); and Liu Bao in gunnies, like N152, LLLL367, NL229, etc. Some of the best/most famous vintages of Liu Bao teas are those produced by the Guangxi Wuzhou Tea Factory (广西梧州茶厂). They produced the famous “VIVE” in the 1980s (with two grades) and a famous 1990s Liu Bao as well. Master Lin ranks the five best Liu Bao teas in this order: 1930s Pu Tian Gong Qing, 1950s Zhong Cha, 1960s LLLL367 (which came from Hong Kong and has four “Ls” as grades from one to four. The “L” represents “orchid”—“lan” in Chinese—because this tea is an Orchid brand, and “four orchids” was their highest grade), 1950s Da Xing Hang and finally 1950s Fu Hua.



普
天
共
庆

宇宙的光



Pu Tian Gong Qing (普天共庆)



1980s VIVE

双星号印



Shuang Xing Hao Yin (SSHHC)

茶 Ma Bao 馬堡

Ma Bao is one of our all-time favorite Liu Bao teas, and we are super excited to share it with you this month. In general, our favorite teas aren't the rarest ones you only enjoy annually, but the solid, high-quality teas that you can enjoy whenever you want and feel comfortable sharing with others! Tea joy is really in the sharing, and a tea like this suggests the times of abundance that Henry spoke of.

Liu Bao tea and Malaysia share a destiny, though distant in space and time. Like much of us, raised far from the home of Tea, Malaysia and Liu Bao were fated to be in love. As we spoke about, Liu Bao tea is very suitable for drinking in the Malaysian climate, which is warm and humid. It is smooth, cooling and comfortable to drink in the weather there. What is also interesting, though, is that Liu Bao tea ages much better in Malaysia than in southern China or Hong Kong. Of course, Malaysians all think that tea ages better there as well, but standing back, one can appreciate the differences between the traditional puerh storage areas of Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Taiwan as just different, and each with its own positive and negative characteristics. Malaysian-stored tea is much more even-keeled, smooth and steady, which really reflects the climate there. Malaysia is also very steady, and besides a short rainy season (usually in December), doesn't see much fluctuation in temperature and humidity over long periods.

The main difference between puerh and Liu Bao tea is in the liveliness of puerh tea, especially energetically, as puerh comes from large-leaf trees, from much more biodiverse forests and has a much richer microbial ecology, resulting in very different fermentation, artificially or naturally over time. One could argue that the humidity and temperature fluctuations of Taiwan, for example, suit this kind of tea; or that the high humidity and constant fermentation of Hong Kong makes for a richer aged puerh. Actually, we love puerh stored in each place for different reasons, and tasting puerh stored in various locations for equal amounts of time (so long as the storage is clean) really just creates different teas, as opposed to better or worse teas. However, with Liu Bao, the smooth and gentle flavors, aromas and energy are indeed much benefited by storage in Malaysia. As with all things Liu Bao, the climate of Malaysia harmonizes perfectly with Liu Bao.

And that is the main reason that Ma Bao is so special: *It was stored in Malaysia from its creation to present.* Many Liu Bao teas were kept for some time in Guangxi, and then often in Hong Kong as well, before making their way to Malaysia. But this unique tea was purchased brand new and stored in Malaysia ever since. This lends it a unique flavor unlike other Liu Bao teas of a similar age—it is smoother, brighter and also longer lasting.

Ma Bao is a beautiful tea with all the characteristic flavors of Liu Bao teas. It is deep, dark and rich, and if you have experience drinking various aged Liu Bao teas, you will indeed notice the smooth and consistent Malaysian storage, which highlights the tea's steady pulse. We find this tea very moving, and especially enjoy it in the early evening, when you have lots of time to relax and share some space with friends—a space we are so honored to share with you all now.



Sidehandle

Gongfu

Water: spring water or the best bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: as hot as possible, fish-eye, 95 °C

Brewing Methods: sidehandle or gongfu (gongfu is ideal)

Steeping: longer, flash, flash, then growing (you can get three flashes as well)

Patience: thirty steepings

茶 Like last month, heat is going to be the most essential aspect of brewing this tea well. Fermented leaves need strong fire to penetrate the leaves' thick cell walls.

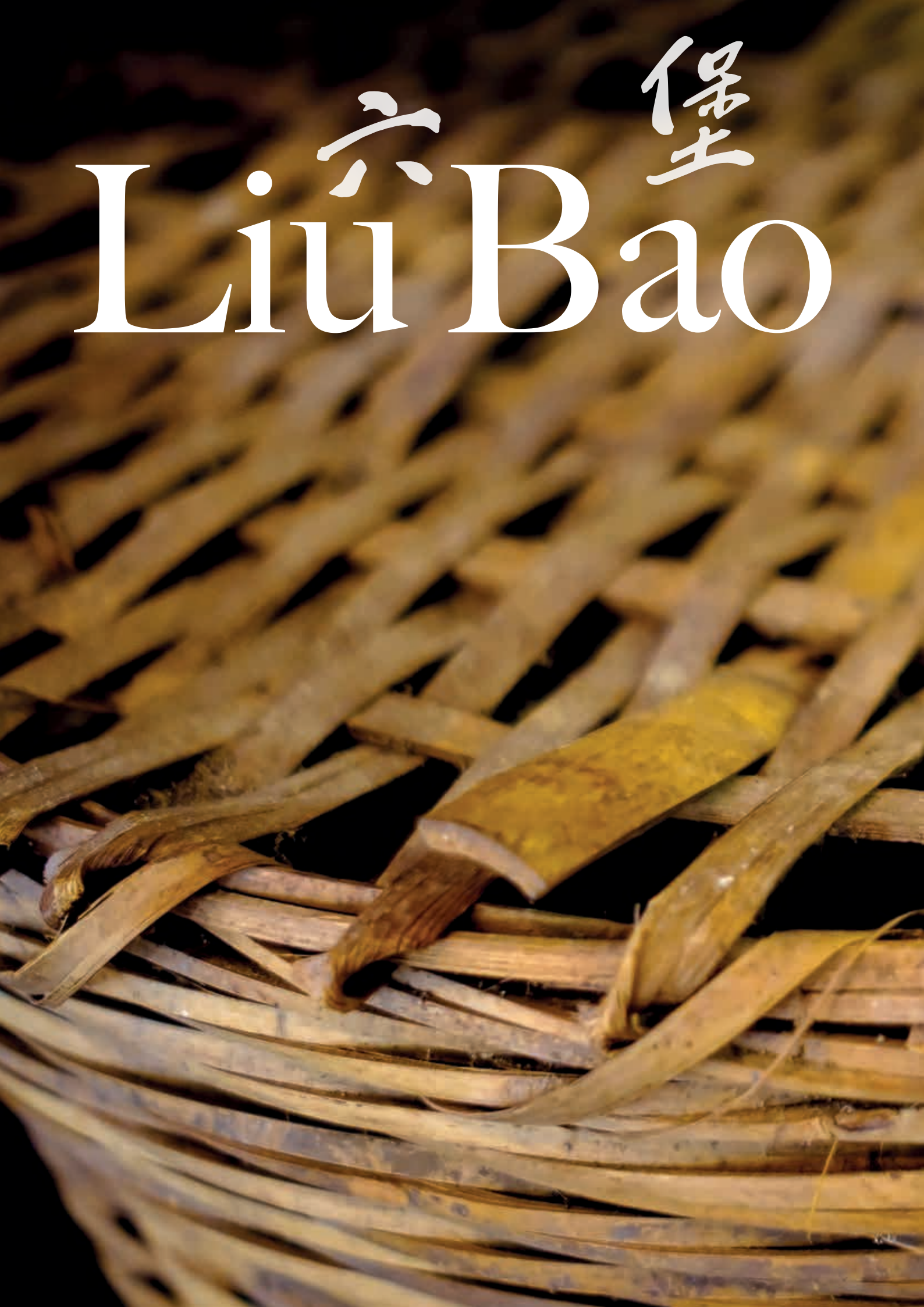
Brewing Tips

This month's tea should ideally be prepared gongfu. We will get so much more from Ma Bao if we prepare it in this way, rewarding all the years of storage with skillful brewing will mean a brighter, smoother cup and a much more patient session. We should get a minimum of thirty steepings from this tea if we are preparing it with the smoothness of temperature and movement that it was aged with! And the session itself will also be smooth from cup to cup, making a very gentle transition from the dark maroons of the early cups to the golden-orange sunset shades of later steepings. (If gongfu tea is not possible for you, then brew this tea in a sidehandle pot and maybe pay a bit more attention to maintaining temperature than you usually do.)

Smooth and graceful movements may take decades to perfect, but we can start with a consistent temperature from kettle to cup—much like the steady climate of Malaysia that created this amazing tea over twenty or more years. Temperature begins with the boil, of course. For this tea, charcoal will be the ideal. If that is not possible, then use a gas stove and transfer to alcohol to maintain a high temperature. The smoothness of our new zisha kettle is perfect for Ma Bao, and will lend the tea an even brighter and more consistent brew from cup to cup.

Other skills we can use to maximize this amazing tea are to shower the pot both before and after steeping, avoid using a pitcher, pouring directly from the teapot and pre-warm our cups before every single steeping. Every one of these methods should be experimented with, of course, though this is not the tea to conduct such experiments. We will always do our experiments with teas that aren't so rare, and reserve these special teas for deep and lasting sessions. The result will be a smoother cup with a brighter and more penetrating flavor, aroma and energy, as well as a longer, more patient session, with many steepings to bring lasting satisfaction.





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Liu Bao



A TREASURE BASKET
OF
TEA CULTURE

TERROIR OF LIU BAO TEA

六堡茶的風土

LIU BAO TEA GROWING AREA



Peng Qing Zhong (彭慶中) was born and raised in Liu Bao and is considered to be one of the world's leading experts on the subject. His seminal book, A Record of Liu Bao, is the hallmark of Liu Bao scholarship in Chinese tea culture. We are very proud to include some translations from this amazing work in our magazine. Mr. Peng hopes we will all develop a deeper appreciation for Liu Bao tea by understanding Liu Bao geography.



茶人: Peng Qing Zhong

Liu Bao Geography

The concept of *terroir*, the influence of specific locales and environmental conditions, is important when it comes to Liu Bao tea. When we talk about which mountain, or *shantou* (山頭) a certain Liu Bao comes from, we're not necessarily referring to a particular mountain. We really mean a very specific location within the Liu Bao growing area: It could be a hillside plantation, or several continuous hills, or a small area several kilometers in perimeter. Varying conditions in the growing environment can produce noticeable differences in the tea, so teas from each location have their own unique characteristics. Some of the factors that influence this are the geographical features of the plantation (whether it's located on a mountain, the lower slopes or a plateau), the local vegetation, soil and differences between communities of tree/plant varieties. These features of *terroir* must be analyzed once the leaf from various regions has been gathered and processed in a standardized fashion.

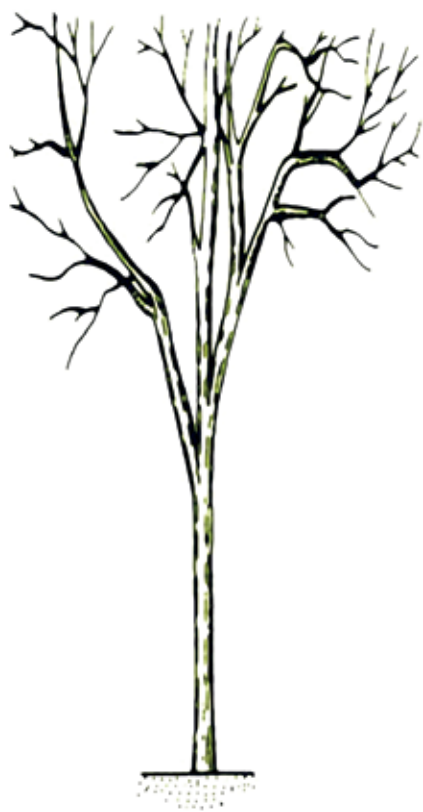
When people refer to the "original" Liu Bao tea plant varietal (原種六堡茶), they mean a sexually-reproducing varietal that is native to the original tea tree communities growing in Liu Bao Village, and has a long history of being grown in the area. It's often referred to as the "original" Liu Bao tea plant to distinguish it from the region's other introduced varieties that are also suited to producing Liu Bao tea. According to a 1959 *Record of Superior Crops in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region*, it

is sometimes also called "narrow-leaf tea" by the locals, to distinguish it from large-leaf varieties. In Guangdong dialect, it is also called "*cha'er* (茶儿)." The *Dictionary of Chinese Tea*, edited by scholar Chen Zongmao (陳宗懋), also contains the following entry on Liu Bao tea, on page 101: "Liu Bao tea is a tea plant varietal that reproduces sexually. It is early sprouting and bush-like in shape, with medium-sized leaves and dense, spreading branches. The leaves are green and elliptical, and have flat surfaces with a slight outward bulge; the blade is flat, and the leaf is of medium quality. The buds and leaves are light green in color, with the occasional appearance of purple. They are not very downy, and remain tender for quite a while. The trees output a medium quantity of leaves. They are quite resistant to cold and drought. The original Liu Bao tea plant varietal grows all over the Liu Bao region."

Historically, small amounts of this varietal either currently grow or once grew in the following parts of Guangxi Province: Wu Bao Village (Shizhai) and Changfa in Cangwu County; Shatian, Shuikou, Daping, Shidong, Mingmei, Chaping and Qingshui in the neighboring city of Hezhou; and in the nearby counties of Cenxi, Mengshan and Zhaoping. The same goes for some parts of the neighboring Guangdong Province, including Luoding, Huaji and particularly the areas bordering the Xijiang River, such as Fengkai, Yu'nan, Gaoyao and Yunfu.

(Some of these places are listed in *The Study of Tea Production*, China Agricultural Publishing House, 1961.)

From quite early on, people began paying attention to the place of origin when judging the quality of Liu Bao; although it grew in a lot of places, "authentic Liu Bao tea" grown in the Liu Bao region itself was the most highly regarded. Many sources mention the fact that "Wu Bao and Si Bao also produce tea." (These place names literally mean "Five Castles" and "Four Castles," while Liu Bao means "Six Castles.") The *Guangxi General Annals* observes that "in terms of excellence, the villages of Liu Bao and Wu Bao are superior; Liu Bao is particularly famous." In an article in the seventh issue of the second edition of *China Tea Knowledge* (1951), author Su Haiwen (蘇海文) mentions that "Wu Bao tea is mainly sold at the major Southeast Asian ports; on average the price is around 10–20% lower than the price of Liu Bao." The older generations of local Chajin recall that in the past, tea from Liu Bao itself was also classified according to where it was grown. The most famous tea-growing spots were Heishi in Tangping, Ludi in Siliu, and Gongzhou in Buyi. Some of the Liu Bao brand names from these places that became quite popular in Hong Kong and Macau included Heishi, Xiadou, Yingji and Guang Yuan Tai. The place names Lichong, Shanping and Tangping were also widely recognized as synonymous with excellent quality.



Large-leaf tea tree



Medium-leaf tea tree



Small-leaf tea tree

茶 There are two large families of tea trees: large- and small-leaf. Large-leaf trees have a single trunk, deep roots and can live for thousands of years. Small-leaf varieties have a single root system that expands horizontally, for the most part, and several trunks—more like a bush. They don't live as long. Puerh is the paragon of the former, large-leaf, old-growth trees. Liu Bao is what could be called a “medium-leaf tree,” which is somewhere in between the two.

The reason behind Liu Bao Village's stand-out quality was its geography: Liu Bao is situated in a mountainous region on the northern side of the Tropic of Cancer, with an average elevation of 250 meters above sea level. It is bordered by Libu to the east, Shizhai to the west, Xiaying and Wangfu to the south, and Hezhou and Shuikou to the north. Throughout the region, nineteen mountain peaks tower above the densely forested landscape. The northwest, west and southwest parts of the Liu Bao region are mountainous with few fields; located here are the main historical Liu Bao tea-producing centers of Tangping, Lichong, Siliu, Buyi, Shanping, Gongping, Daning, Wutong and Gao. In addition, there are the lower-lying regions, with wider valleys and more fertile soil, which produce bamboo, timber and rice, as well as Liu Bao tea in places; these include Hekou, Dazhong, Shouxi, Jiucheng, Puwang and Cancun.

The total area of the Liu Bao region is around 300,269 hectares, of which about 93% is made up of hilly or mountainous terrain. Higher-altitude hills between 250–500 m

above sea level cover around 52% of the total area, while mountainous terrain of 500–800 m in altitude encompasses around 33%. So, as you can tell, the region's tea-growing areas are largely located on mountains and hills. Due to erosion of sandstone and shale, the soil in the Liu Bao tea region has a high sand content; it is a slightly acidic, medium loam, with loose topsoil. The soil found below 450 m in altitude tends to be mountainous red or yellow-red soil, while from 450–700 m this gives way to transitional red-yellow soil. The average temperature in the tea region is 19–20 °C. The western parts of the region, including Tangping, Siliu, Buyi, Shanping and Gongping, are relatively high altitude, with high humidity and a big difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures. Outside of the slightly clearer season from May to August, the region is generally blanketed in thick fog, with scenic landscapes of clouds and mist enveloping and swirling around the mountains.

Because of the differences created by the terrain, rivers, soil and microclimate, the various parts of the Liu Bao tea region all produce tea with

distinct characteristics. Historically, the original Liu Bao tea plants in the region were all bred using the fruit of the tea plants to carry out propagation through sexual reproduction, which increased diversity among the varieties in the region. This means that even between individual trees in various populations, you can see differences in leaf shape and color, with some red- and purple-leafed varieties scattered throughout. The difference is especially noticeable between geographically distant production areas: for example, red-leafed and purple-leafed varieties are more common in the mountain plantations of Siliu, Buyi and so on. The teas grown in different regions also have their own distinctive flavor and aroma.

We can summarize the differences between teas from various parts of Liu Bao by dividing the area into four regions:

Southeast Region

This includes the eastern and southeastern regions of Puwang,



茶 Above is a garden in Wu Tong (check the map on the previous page). Though the trees are young, they are original varietal. When people refer to the “original” Liu Bao tea plant varietal (原種六堡茶), they mean a sexually-reproducing varietal that is native to the original tea tree communities growing in Liu Bao Village, and has a long history of being grown in the area. To the right is a local checking his plants on a misty Baji Mountain morning.

Cancun and Shouxi. In this region, the tail end of the Cancun River passes by Ducun, Si'ai and Jiucheng. The Puwang River also flows by Mugua and Xinwang. In the past, this area wasn't a main Liu Bao tea center, and only produced a small amount of tea. The Liu Bao tea produced here is gentle and refined in character.

Liu Bao River Region

This region borders the river that it's named for, and includes Hekou, Dazhong, Jiucheng and the surrounding districts. It produces a fair volume of Liu Bao, and the local tea is characterized by its rich, mellow flavor and full-bodied aroma.

Wutong River Region

This region encompasses Daning, Gao and Wutong. Historically, it produced a high volume of Liu Bao tea. The area is home to the Wutong River, which flows from the tail ends of the Daning and Jiuchong rivers; it also fea-

tures two tall mountains, Chongyuan Peak and Piaoshan Peak. The local Liu Bao is known for its attractive color and smooth taste, with a gentle flavor and a distinctive aroma.

Northwest Region

This area is home to Buyi, Siliu, Lichong, Gongping, Tangping and Shanping. The terrain here is largely mountains and hills. The Buyi River flows through Tian and Tangping, and combines the Siliu and Lichong tributaries. Historically, this area was an important center for Liu Bao tea production, and it includes well-known tea regions, such as Tangping (which encompasses the Heishi tea region), Buyi (home to the Gongzhou tea region), Siliu (home to the Ludi tea region), Lichong and Shanping. Famous historical Liu Bao brands such as Heishi tea (黑石茶), Xiadou tea (蝦鬥茶), Gongzhou tea (恭州茶) and Ludi tea (蘆荻茶) all come from this region.

The northwest region is also famed for its “Four Great Mountains,” which were associated with the most well-

known Liu Bao tea brands. The Heishi “Black Stone” region below Tangping's Heishi Mountain produced Heishi tea, while Shuangji “Double Topknot” Mountain, at an elevation of 757 m, overlooks the areas of Siliu and Lichong, which produced Xiadou tea. At the base of Moduan “Ink Hall” Peak (altitude 596 m), Sanzuo “Three Points” Peak (altitude 406 m) and Shuangji Mountain lay the areas of Ludi, known for its Ludi tea, and the area of Buyi, including Gongzhou and Dailong Mountain, which produced Gongzhou tea.

The *Cangwu County Records*, published during the reign of the Qing Emperor Tongzhi, note that “Liu Bao Village produces excellent tea, with a rich flavor that does not fade when left overnight. The Xiadou area produces a tea called Xiadou tea, with a wonderful color and flavor, although it is slightly lighter.” As we can see in this description, Liu Bao tea (including Heishi, Ludi and Gongzhou) is known for its stronger flavor, while Xiadou tea is described as “wonderful,” even outstanding, in terms of flavor, color and fragrance.

Its only unfavorable comparison being in terms of strength of flavor. Overall, this shows that Xiadou tea was very highly regarded.

As well as making a broad comparison of the four tea-producing regions of Liu Bao, we can also take a more in-depth look at the tea from each area. For example, we can say that Heishi tea, Ludi tea and Gongzhou tea all have a strong flavor, but in fact, these teas all display a slightly different style of “strength.” Heishi tea is characterized by its “thick,” dense flavor, with a forceful energy and a “mountainous”

fragrance. It has a power and strength to it, and a deep, resounding fragrance. So, we could think of these three different types of strength as thickness, depth and power. Ludi tea, on the other hand, is characterized by its pure, broad flavor and fragrance, and its honest, spirited energy. We can think of its strength as thick, broad and pure. Gongzhou tea is known for its rich mellowness, with a strong flavor and full fragrance; it goes down smoothly and has an abundant energy and an elegant charm. Its three types of strength can be described as rich, mellow and full-bod-

ied. In the northwest parts of the Liu Bao region, there are also many other mountainous areas famed throughout history for producing “strong flavored” Liu Bao tea, including Caodui, Lishai, Sangao, Tianhong, Huangsun and Zhaoqing, as well as Gongping and Shanping, near Zhaoqing Peak.



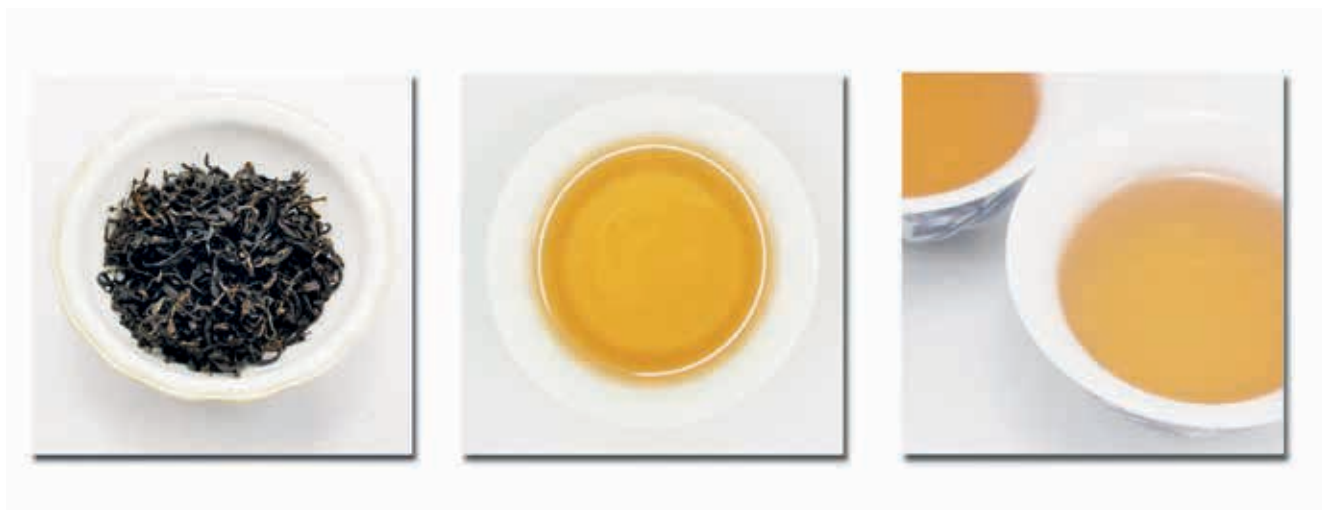
茶 Above left is Gongping Village’s tea farm, which is at high altitude for the area. The trees there are also older than other places Liu Bao is grown. Below is Liu Bao from Buyi, which is considered the original site of Liu Bao agriculture. Above right are tools that were used to harvest tea traditionally, which is unique to Liu Bao. Since many leaves were picked at once, unlike many other kinds of tea that only select bud-sets, these large blades made the work easier.



A Comparison of Liu Bao from the “Four Great Mountains” 珍賞 四大山頭六堡之比較 熟茶

Heishi Tea (黑石茶), from beside Heishi Village

Since the early days, Heishi tea has enjoyed wide repute for its rich, strong flavor and robust energy. Its distinguishing characteristics are its density of flavor and potent energy, with a unique “mountain” flavor. The Heishi Liu Bao that we tasted had been aged for four years. It has a rich, mellow flavor, a substantial fragrance, a shiny yellow-orange luster and a robust energy. It displays the famed “mountain” aroma, which becomes even more noticeable after five steepings. It has a lingering flavor and charm that stays in the mind for a long time. The leaf is even and uniform, and the craftsmanship is authentic. With a longer period of suitable storage, it is likely to improve even further—it will be well worth the wait.



Ludi Tea (蘆荻茶), from the Diwei Mountain Ridge

Ludi tea is a well-known Liu Bao—all the associated places such as Dibang, Diwei and Lanqing make excellent tea. Ludi tea is characterized by its strength, pure flavor and simple aroma. This Ludi was a new tea, aged for around two years, and the liquor was yellow in color with a hint of green. It has a simple fragrance and a concentrated flavor, with a broad, lingering aftertaste. It has an honest, spirited energy, and a great potential for aging. All in all, it’s a great representative example of Ludi tea.



Lichong Tea (理冲茶), from the Lichong Mountain Ridge

Lichong has historically been a main center for Liu Bao tea production, and makes excellent tea, with a fine reputation among tea lovers. Lichong tea is known for its gentle flavor and strong energy, with a light, elegant fragrance. It is quite a patient tea. The Lichong Liu Bao that we tasted was a spring tea. It is bright yellow with a greenish tint, with a strong flavor and a fine smoothness in the throat. It has the fresh scent of a new tea, with a robust energy, a mellow flavor and a noticeably sweet aftertaste. It's a great quality tea, with a strong potential for development as it ages.



Xiadou Tea (蝦鬥茶), from the Lichong Mountain Ridge

The *Cangwu County Records* from the reign of the Qing Emperor Tongzhi contain this passage: “Xiadou tea has a wonderful color, flavor and aroma, though it is just a little light.” This reflects a very high opinion of Xiadou tea at the time. This description of the tea as “a little light” is likely given in comparison to the “strong” flavors of Heishi, Ludi and Gongzhou tea. To look at it from another angle, “light” can also imply a delicate, refined flavor and a refreshing mouthfeel. So in reality, this relative “lightness” is not seen as a flaw, but rather as a difference in style. I acquired this particular Xiadou tea from an elderly Chajin native to Liu Bao; it had been personally stored for several decades by Xiadou tea master Chen Yongchang (陳永昌). The leaf was carefully chosen Lichong tea, and was processed authentically. In terms of the tea liquor, it was truly the essence of the description in the *Cangwu County Records*, with a “wonderful color, flavor and aroma.” It was a clear, deep red, and filled the room with a wonderful aged tea aroma on the first steeping. After ten steepings, it was as if the fragrance had accumulated inside the tea; the aroma was prominent when swallowing, and lingered in the mouth for a long time. Although the tea was from a long-ago vintage, its inner quality shone through in the flavor and aroma. This really was an outstanding Liu Bao tea, and absolutely worthy of its reputation as one of the most famed teas of its generation!



Gongzhou Tea (恭州茶), from near Yatang

Gongzhou was the old name for what is now the eastern part of Yatang in Buyi and the surrounding tea-growing areas. Authentic Gongzhou tea is known for its mellowness, with a strong flavor, a multi-layered fragrance and a robust energy. It has a full and harmonious feel in the throat, and a gentle charm to it. This particular tea from Yatang in Buyi was a spring tea, a classic example of Gongzhou tea. Since it's a new tea, the liquor was a greenish-yellow color, with a strong flavor, mellow and sweet with a hint of bitterness. It has a brief, sweet aftertaste and a flavor that lingers in the throat. It noticeably displays the sweet scent of new tea, with a faint hint of the fragrance that is unique to this tea variety, and a robust energy. The buds and leaves in the brewed tea are sturdy, indicating a well-made tea; it has great storage potential.



Tangping Tea (塘坪茶), from Dalang

Historically, Tangping was one of the most important Liu Bao tea-growing areas, and produced a very high volume of tea. Tangping has quite a diverse range of different styles of tea, and the leaf from the original Liu Bao tea plant varieties in the area is of very high quality. (In recent years, due to the promotion of planting certain tea varieties, a small amount of tea of the “Guangxi Number 1 Green” variety has also been planted in the area, so one must be careful to distinguish these two varieties.) Original Liu Bao tea from Tangping has a good flavor and a robust energy, and displays a well-developed fragrance quite quickly when aged. It has a sweet, gentle flavor, a soft mouthfeel and an elegant aroma. This particular Liu Bao tea was made from Dalang leaf and aged for nearly five years. The liquor has already become a clear yellow, with a strong flavor and a note of sweetness. It has a harmonious flavor and a subtle, long-lasting fragrance, which was still faintly present after five steepings. It's an excellent quality tea.



Shanping Tea (山坪茶), from Longfu

The people of Shanping are of the Yao ethnicity. The Liu Bao tea produced there is a good quality, patient tea with a smooth flavor, highly esteemed among Chajin. The leaf for this particular tea came from Longfu in Shanping, and had been aged for five years. It has a mellow flavor reminiscent of betel nut, with a reddish-brown liquor and a lasting fragrance. This tea was most likely harvested from above the Longfu mountain ridge. The flavor is harmonious yet not insipid; the mouth-feel is thick but not overbearing. The liquor is still fragrant and flavorful after five steepings, and even after fifteen, it doesn't lose its flavor. The aroma is simple and pleasant, the brewed tea leaves are neat and even, and the buds plump. It's a very promising example of Shanping tea.



優質茶籃

Wutong Tea (梧峒茶), from the Wutong Mountain Ridge

Wutong tea is characterized by its mild flavor, delicate liquor and sweet aftertaste, accompanied by a pleasant sensation in the throat. It has quite a unique aroma. In comparison to Liu Bao teas from other places, the tea from Wutong, Daning and Gao displays slightly more rapid changes in color and flavor when aged. This tea was about three years old. Before brewing, the dry leaves were neat, even and tightly curled. After pouring the water, you can see that the liquor has already turned a reddish-brown color, similar to what you'd observe from a four- or five-year-old tea from elsewhere. It has a clear liquor and a mild flavor. It's a good quality tea, with a sweet, mellow flavor and a hidden fragrance contained within the leaves. Observing the brewed leaves revealed that the tea is made authentically, from fine, carefully selected leaves, which displays Wutong tea's unique characteristics very well.



The Best Location for Liu Bao

Through the practice of tea-making over the years, we have come to realize the importance of many factors in determining the quality of Liu Bao tea, from soil quality and cultivation, to the season and timing of harvesting, to processing techniques such as kill-green and rolling. For example, tea harvested after the rains will be less bold in flavor; Liu Bao tea planted on mountain ridges and hillsides will be rich and fragrant, while tea planted in fields with fertilizers high in nitrogen will end up with a weaker fragrance, lacking in flavor and spirit (the locals call this “tea from the belly of the

fields”). In addition, if the kill-green step is left too late, the leaves may begin to oxidize and turn red, influencing the flavor of the tea. If the temperature is not properly controlled during kill-green, the leaves may burn; in the drying process, too, the temperature and intensity of the fire can influence the aroma of the tea. If the firewood used during kill-green, drying or storage produces thick smoke, this can also lead to a smoky flavor in the tea. All these factors can directly influence the character and quality of the tea. So, there’s a lot that goes into the making of a quality Liu Bao: we must start in

a good tea region, on a good mountain, with good planting techniques and good processing methods. With the great diversity present within the Liu Bao tea region, if we wish to take an objective look at tea from the “Four Great Mountains,” we must appreciate the differences between the many varieties of Liu Bao tea, and judge each tea based on its own unique characteristics.



茶 Buyi Mountain in the early morning. There are wild tea trees in the hills, amongst all the pines and other trees. Some of them are even old-growth. The Buyi River flows through Tian and Tangping, and combines the Siliu and Lichong tributaries. Historically, this area was an important center for Liu Bao tea production.



Gongfu Teapot

功夫茶壺



The art of gongfu tea experiments is crucial in this tea tradition. We take great joy in carrying on this important part of tea and in conducting weekly experiments here at the Hut. Nothing feels better than speaking confidently about tea through one's own experience.

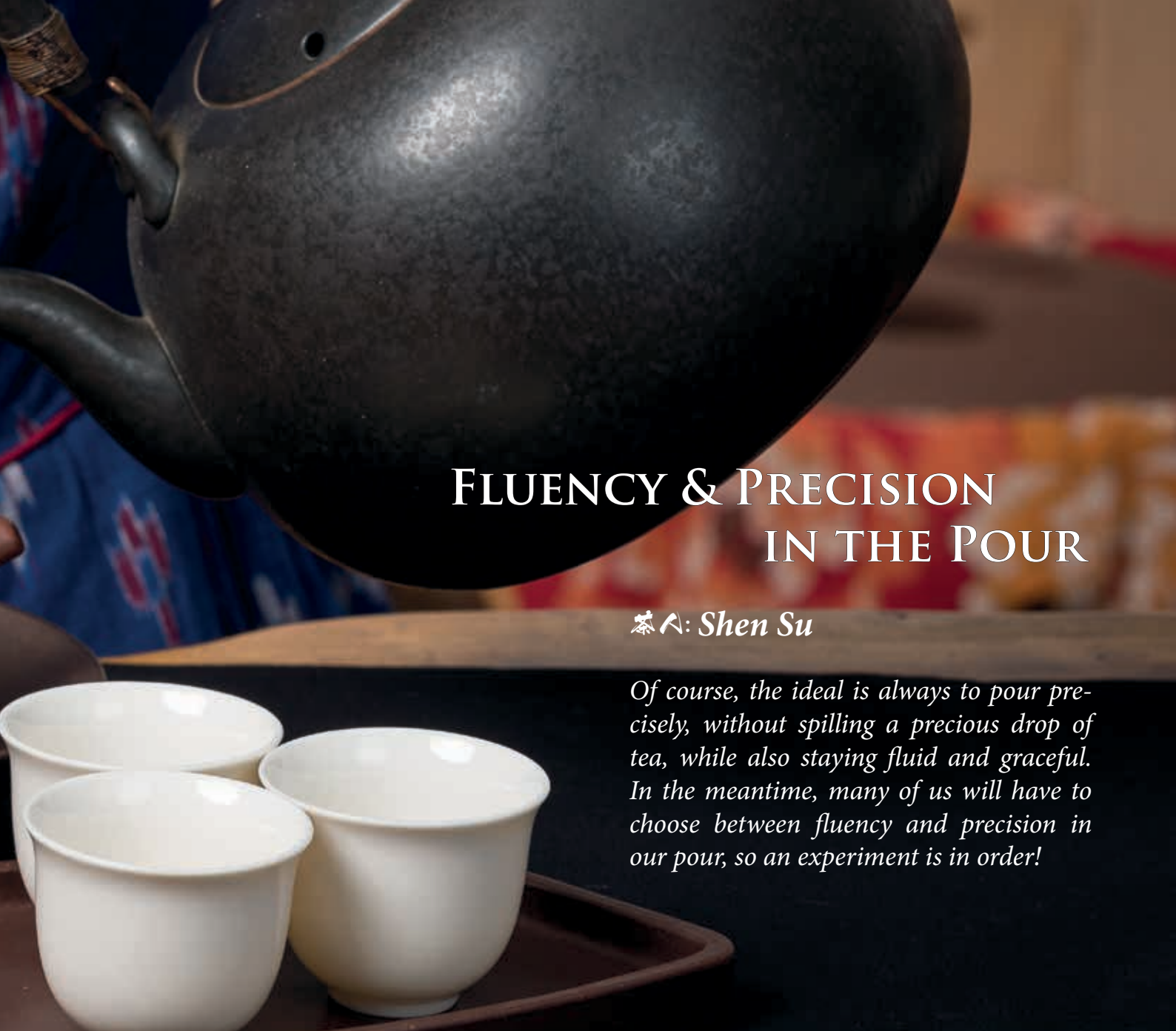
Remember to stick to your own experience and be open to the fact that you might need to return to this experiment again in the future to more fully understand and feel the differences. In fact, returning to an experiment is a great opportunity to practice beginner's mind, which is a deeper lesson infused into all experiments. There is always another layer to unfold, another lesson to learn, no matter how many times you've done the experiment.

Can you do the same experiment again without influencing yourself from your previous experience? Can you drink your tea for the first time every time? Please let us know, especially on our new Global Tea Hut app group dedicated to gongfu tea experiments.

This experiment is particularly important because there is a lot going on when handling a gongfu teapot as you pour into cups. It takes a lot of skill to pour even amounts and even infusions into each guest's cup, and the way in which you pour influences the tea. This is the very last moment of contact with the tea as it's steeping. Many of us feel a sense of disconnection from the tea once it leaves the spout of our teapot, but Wu De often recommends extending that sense of connection

through the pour and into the cup. We sometimes refer to this as "placing" the tea versus "pouring" the tea, in the way you would gently place something down with care and attention. Whether you are pouring fluently or precisely, a sense of connection through the pour and into the cup will result in finer tea and greater connection to your tea brewing.

This is also a transitional experiment, as the results can have a very powerful influence on your practice. Most of the experiments we do at the Center, and have therefore covered in this magazine, revolve around water, fire, types of teaware or whether or not to shower the pot. This experiment, however, is a bridge from the equipment and method to the brewer her-



FLUENCY & PRECISION IN THE POUR

茶人: Shen Su

Of course, the ideal is always to pour precisely, without spilling a precious drop of tea, while also staying fluid and graceful. In the meantime, many of us will have to choose between fluency and precision in our pour, so an experiment is in order!

self. The heart/mind shift when you focus on pouring very precisely without spilling a drop versus pouring fluently and smoothly without hesitation. If we can then experience the difference this has on the cup of tea before us, new and powerful insights arise. We begin to realize that the brewer has a tremendous effect on the tea, just as two different musicians would play the same sheet music in a completely different way, even on the same instrument.

It is a subtle shift to start noticing the way my movements affect the physical constitution on tea liquor. Through this change, I begin to cultivate myself, in order to make tea, recognizing that my posture and body mechanics do, in fact, influence the tea I prepare. And in order to change

these, I will have to change my lifestyle. Diet, exercise, meditation and all other aspects of life shape my body mechanics, and therefore, my tea. At this point, my tea starts to really become a way of life.

There is something life-changing about the relationship between the pour and the tea liquor that we serve, because through this experience, I start to question which other movements affect my tea. Does the placement of my elbow matter? How about my shoulders?

This experiment also highlights the importance of teapot design. A well-designed teapot shares a balance of aesthetics and function. A good teapot should fit comfortably and confidently into your hand. It almost “clicks”

into place when you pick it up. If your teapot is awkward to use and doesn't function well, then consider the last thing on your mind as you struggle to pour properly and how that influences your tea. Some brewing vessels are designed so poorly that they are painful to handle, because they get too hot, and then pain is in the last part of your hand touching the pot as you pour. Whether pouring precisely or fluently, use a teapot that functions well.

Some teapots encourage either precise or fluent pouring. If they have an elongated spout that is well designed, they will pour more precisely, while pots with more open spouts, like canon spouts for example, will be easier to pour fluently. Doing this experiment may also reveal aspects of your pot.

THE EXPERIMENT

For these gongfu experiments, remember to use a simple tea that you are familiar with and brew it lighter than you normally would. This is conducive to noticing any differences from cup to cup, whereas using a strong, rich and dark tea will only complicate your experience. Also, make sure that your gongfu teapot is authentic zisha or purple-sand clay; otherwise, the subtle differences will get lost in the poor quality of a fake or cheap pot. This experiment is simple but subtle. It is to determine the difference between pouring fluently and precisely from the teapot into your cups.

Pouring fluently means a continual pour from cup to cup without breaking the pour, gracefully filling each cup equally. Your cups should be placed together on a flat tray in a square or triangular shape (unless you only have two), so pouring fluently should be done in a counter-clockwise, circular fashion, assuming you are holding the gongfu pot in your right hand.

Pouring precisely means breaking the pour between each cup, making sure not to spill, and placing the pour as precisely as possible, going back and forth between all the cups and filling them equally. For both methods, each cup should be equal in terms of volume and infusion.

Materials

- 茶 Purple-sand clay gongfu teapot
- 茶 1–2 grams of simple tea
- 茶 4–6 white porcelain gongfu cups
- 茶 Flat tray and 2–3 coasters
- 茶 Waste-water basin
- 茶 Good water, kettle and heat source

流利精確





Procedure

Prepare your tea space, teaware and tea. Clean your teaware with hot water. I used six identical white porcelain, tulip-shaped gongfu cups. Three were placed on the flat tray, making a triangular shape. The tray catches any spilled water as you pour fluently into these cups. The other three cups were placed on three coasters, separated from one another, but still in a triangular shape. If you only have two or three cups, you can still do the experiment, I just found it psychologically useful to separate cups for each pouring method: three to pour into fluently and three to pour into precisely.

I alternated between pouring methods with each infusion. First, I poured precisely into the three cups separated on coasters, drank the tea and wrote down my notes. In the second infusion, I poured fluently into the other three cups together on the tray and did the same. I repeated this at least three times. I drank one or two of the three cups each infusion and discarded the rest into my waste-water basin. Drinking three cups for multiple rounds is too much, but *having* three or more cups is better to practice pouring fluently and precisely. Obviously, one cup isn't enough, and while two could work, it's better with three or more, to taste and feel the difference.

Observations

As always, I focused on the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea to write down my observations; also, taking note of the flavors and aromas, but not paying too much attention to those very subjective qualities. I also noted how different it felt on the physical level to pour in these two ways. My ability to pour precisely can definitely use some improvement!

Of course, I won't reveal the findings of my experiment, and will instead leave that up to you! Which pouring method, in your experience, produced a finer cup of tea? Was it so great that you changed the way you pour? Is there a way to strike a balance between the two methods?

HISTORY OF LIU BAO TEA

六堡茶掌故

進入廣州城堡的旅程



We continue our Liu Bao journey, delving deeper into the topic than has ever been done in English. We continue our translations of Peng Qing Zhong's seminal work, A Record of Liu Bao, this time with a chapter on the history of Liu Bao tea. Understanding the historical context for this tea brings a great appreciation for the people who devoted their entire lives to its production. These centuries of culture are worth celebrating!



茶人: Peng Qing Zhong

Stories of Liu Bao, the Tea Town

Liu Bao is a town located in the Cangwu County of Guangxi. On Hekou Street of the town, there was an old camphor tree. Standing there, you can hear the river flowing gently. This tree and the river had witnessed all the changes that occurred throughout the hundreds of years in the town, and maybe they are willing to share with us all the tea stories of this tea town.

There have always been ups and downs for Liu Bao tea, and this is especially true during the last one hundred years. Many would describe these stories as tragedy. Yet, I believe you may be interested in reading such stories, which are not known by many. The following stories were either told by the elderly who live in the town, or extracted from the *Records of Liu Bao*, written in 1985.

The First Teahouse

In ancient times, Liu Bao was not a prosperous town. Residents in the town faced different problems, such as inconvenient transportation, and also a lack of doctors or modern medicine. Luckily, wild tea trees were not in short supply in this mountain area. One day, people in the town started cultivating tea trees, so that they could make teas for medical purposes and daily use. From what we heard from the folktales and saw from the genealogy records, we know the tea town had a population boom during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

Part of the population growth was contributed by local citizens,

whose heritage can be traced back to the Baiyue (百越) people. Since their ancestors had been learning the culture and knowledge of Chinese since the Qin Dynasty (221 BCE–206 BCE), they were considered as Chinese people who had kept their local customs. Most of those citizens had been living in the Yao Village of Liu Bao. With several hundred years of experience growing teas, the Yao Village is still widely considered as a famous tea-producing village today. Another factor that contributed to the population growth during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) and Ming Dynasty was that there had been many wars in China during the period. People were rushing to the mountains to escape from war, and many of them had been settling down in Liu Bao since then.

Yi Zhangqi, a Liu Bao resident who is also an expert in the history of Liu Bao, shared some of his findings. According to Yi, many of his ancestors were government officials in Cangwu from the late Yuan to the early Ming dynasties. The family later relocated to Liu Bao. At that time, the family relied on blacksmithing for their income. This implied that Liu Bao was already a densely populated town, likely with a well-developed agricultural sector to provide sufficient food for its residents. According to studies, the Wei and He families, two of the major families in Liu Bao, also settled down in the town during the Ming Dynasty. According to Chen Bochang, a tea expert in Liu Bao, his family was also relocated from the northern part of China during the early Ming Dynasty.

Being a mountainous area with wide valleys and pleasant climate, Liu Bao has been a producer of tea, bamboo, wood, firewood, fungus and mushrooms. Before the Yuan Dynasty, residents in Liu Bao had to produce everything they needed due to transportation barriers. Population growth created the soil for the handicraft and trading business to grow. The earliest traders in Liu Bao would use packhorses to transport the products, which were mainly necessity goods. Some markets were then naturally formed in densely populated areas during the late Ming Dynasty. Other than necessities, local products, including teas, were sold in these markets, sometimes taking the form of barter. At the same time, growth in population also boosted the agricultural sector. The handicraft industry, being an important supplement to the agricultural economy, had also been developing rapidly since then.

Teas were also being produced on a larger scale. The tea manufacturers adopted the steam-fixing method, which was used since the Tang and Song dynasties (618–907, 960–1276), to produce both tea cakes and loose-leaf teas. Even though the production of tea cakes using the steam-fixing method was no longer popular in the central parts of China during this period, tea producers in Liu Bao did not follow the trend. Instead, they insisted on using the traditional method to produce teas, mainly for locals who favored such tea. In fact, the tea-production methods and tools used in those days are still in use today.

According to *Records of Liu Bao*, the first trading business in the town was a grocery store established on Hekou Street by the Mo family. Teas, necessities and other local products were being sold in this store. As local demand for necessities (which were not produced in Liu Bao) kept increasing, some businessmen started trading necessities bought from other towns for the high-quality goods produced in Liu Bao. Naturally, many grocery stores also became tea dealers. Teas produced in Liu Bao at the time were mainly transported by sea and being sold in the coastal area of Guangdong. Many tea lovers in Guangdong, especially those who lived near the Xi River, were attracted by the strong taste of Liu Bao teas.

Deng Chengwen, a merchant in Guangdong, saw a great business opportunity in trading teas and other local goods produced in Liu Bao, after realizing that these products offered excellent value for money. After making a fortune through trading in firewood and tea, Deng built a large cottage in Liu Bao for his business and named it “The Wen’s (文記).” Deng intensely studied the teas being produced in the town, and discovered that besides the strong taste, Liu Bao teas were also a popular medicine for indigestion and diarrhea in Yu’nan, Zhaoqing, Yunfu and other places. Since then, he purchased Liu Bao teas in large scale and sold them to the Guangdong market. The fact that Liu Bao sounded the same as “six fortunes” in Cantonese was also a reason why Liu Bao teas were beloved in the province.

Seeing the huge demand of high-quality teas in the Guangdong market, Deng decided to focus on the tea business three years later. Other than building a factory and a warehouse, he also hired local workers and experts in tea production from Guangdong. As he was not a tea grower himself, he also started purchasing freshly picked tea leaves from tea growers in Liu Bao. According to *Records of Liu Bao*, Deng’s business had been producing Liu Bao loose-leaf tea and *Lu’an tea* (六安茶) in the beginning. Later, tea leaves produced in the town were also used in the production of puerh teas. According to some senior Liu Bao residents, Deng’s business would later classify his products into “Upper Grade,”

“Middle Grade” and “Lower Grade,” with each product being sealed (which serves as a trademark) before selling in the market. At the same time, *nei fei* (“內飛,” literally “inner trademark ticket”) were also put into the teas produced by The Wen’s. The inclusion of *nei fei* in tea products was considered an innovation at the time.

In fact, the growth of Liu Bao tea was largely due to Guangdong people. Some even say that Guangdong, especially the southern part of the region, provided the necessary soil for Liu Bao tea to flourish. Before Liu Bao tea became a star product, it was only consumed by the people in neighboring cities, and later, they were sold to Hong Kong, Macao and Southeast Asia countries. Most of the tea traders at that time were from Guangdong, and most of the teahouses established in Liu Bao were also owned by Guangdong residents. Since the Ming Dynasty, drinking Liu Bao tea had become a popular pastime for people in southern China, and this was especially true for Cantonese people. The huge demand for tea in this region made possible the large-scale production and exportation of Liu Bao tea. Many Cantonese people migrated to Southeast Asia during the late 19th century to the early 20th century, and they brought the habit of tea-drinking with them to foreign countries, partly due to the climate and working conditions in Southeast Asia countries. The production level of Liu Bao tea peaked by the Second Sino-Japanese War, which remains unmatched today.

The success story of The Wen’s and the increasing reputation of Liu Bao tea attracted tea traders to set up their business in the town. *Shengfa* (盛發), a teahouse established by Liang, a Cangwu resident, was one of the first participants of the teahouse boom. Later, a tea trader from Heshan (a city in Guangdong) set up *Sheng Kee* (生記), before many Guangdong tea traders from different cities would enter the tea business by setting up teahouses on Hekou Street. Some tea factories hired tea experts to collect tea leaves in Liu Bao during the spring, before transporting the raw materials back for production in autumn. Attracted by the potential, traders chose to establish an office in the town for convenience and to facilitate the movement of tea.

The Rise of Liu Bao Tea

Owing to the geographical location, a foggy climate, ideal soil conditions and other factors, Liu Bao tea had a strong taste, which was beloved among tea drinkers. On the other hand, during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the government officials had loosened its grip on tea production, and taxes were not as strictly implemented, which also contributed to the development of Liu Bao tea. Through word of mouth, drinking Liu Bao teas became increasingly popular among Guangdong people, who already had the habit of tea-drinking for more than 1,000 years.

Historical records suggest that people in Chaozhou and Shantou had been tea consumers since the Song Dynasty, and a large number of tea rooms were already in place during the Song and Ming dynasties. Facing the hot and humid climate in Guangdong, tea has long been seen as a refreshing drink among the grassroots in Guangdong. Since the Ming Dynasty, many tea houses were established in the markets for these people, and serving teas to customers had then become a must for every restaurant in the region. Since the 1850s, Guangdong people would go to the Yi Li Guan (一厘館, roughly translated as “1-Cent House”), which was a restaurant usually with only one table and four chairs, to enjoy a cup of tea and also a piece of cake. In front of the entrance of every Yi Li Guan, there would always be a wood sign with the Chinese character “茶 (tea)” written on it. In the 1860s or 1870s, Er Li Guan (二厘館, roughly translated as “2-Cent House”), a higher-end tea house, also started to appear in Guangdong, which made the trend of drinking teas in tea houses even more popular among Guangdong people.

Since the Ming Dynasty, teas were usually brewed in a large teapot. Even up until now, you can still see Guangdong people brewing teas in a large porcelain teapot, and you can still find those teapots being sold in the china-ware store. Shiwan (a town located in Foshan, Guangdong) was a teapot-producing town in which many Cantonese-style porcelain teapots were being manufactured. You can say that the huge consumption of Liu Bao tea



茶 In 1928 and 1929, a foreign missionary traveled to Liu Bao and made the photography on the right of aboriginal people who were tea producers. Traveling between the small villages and markets required horses. People, then and now, carry tea down the steep mountain paths to market. Though there is now a modern road (shown below), people still use horses to bring their goods to town, showing that Liu Bao has changed much in modern times. Traditionally, farmers would trade their tea for sweet potatoes and rice, along with other sundry goods.

among Cantonese people was largely attributed to the tea-drinking habit of those people. Without the ample supply of tea lovers in the region, the rise of Liu Bao tea may not have been possible. Since the 1850s, Liu Bao tea has been the standard choice of tea among many Guangdong residents. Other than having a favorable reputation, Guangdong people also like the strong taste of Liu Bao tea and its patience. In addition, many love Liu Bao tea because the brewed leaves won't turn sour when stored overnight.

From 1847 to 1880, many large tin mines were being discovered in Malaysia. Attracted by high wages, a large number of workers in Southern China, especially people in Guangdong, went to Malaysia and became miners. The climate of Malaysia was very hot and humid. Needless to say, the condition in the tin mines could only be worse. Many Chinese workers were suffering from vomiting, diarrhea and abdom-

inal cramps before they were able to make a fortune. As it was widely believed that Liu Bao tea was effective in curing vomiting and diarrhea, many of the workers started drinking the Liu Bao teas they brought with them to Malaysia. As a result, they discovered that Liu Bao tea was not only effective in curing vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, but could also be used to relieve the symptoms of heat exhaustion. Liu Bao tea would then become a necessity for every Chinese tin miner. It was not only because of the medical use of the tea, but also due to the fact that Liu Bao tea was also an effective cure for homesickness. The popularity of the tea among miners boosted the production and exportation level of this magical medicine to Malaysia.

In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, the tea industry had become extremely vigorous. State-owned tea companies, local tea traders and foreign tea busi-

nesses were all establishing their offices in the Thirteen Hongs of Canton. The area had emerged as the major tea export center for foreign markets. As the cost of sea freight shipping was relatively low, Liu Bao tea, which was known for its great value for money, sold very well in foreign markets. Hence, more and more tea companies from Guangdong and Hong Kong went to Hekou Street to purchase tea leaves.

The Good Old Days

Most of the tea-trading facilities in the town of Liu Bao no longer exist today. It was due to the reformation of the tea industry implemented by the Communist Party, "The Campaign to Destroy the Four Olds." This is, of course, also known as the "Cultural Revolution," which changed all of China through and through, including architecture and tea.

Most of the teahouses in Liu Bao did not survive these catastrophes, and a large proportion of those lucky survivors were demolished during the 1960s and 1970s.

The last tea-trading facility in Liu Bao was finally demolished in 2011. Local residents used to call this house “the tea kiosk.” This house was built of bricks with tile roofs, located in a place called Ma Lian Ping (馬練坪). You could tell how big the tea-trading business in Liu Bao was by seeing how large the house was. The reason that this house could survive for such a long time was that it had been renovated and changed to be a residential house.

There were originally no walls when the tea kiosk was built. The roof was supported by brick pillars, making the building look like a Chinese-style kiosk. Tea growers could take a rest under the roof as they were waiting for the tea leaves to be received by the teahouses. Inside the house were the traditional drawings you would often see in a southern Chinese mansion. Even though most of the drawings were blackened by smoke, they were still recognizable before the kiosk was demolished. Like the Wen’s, this kiosk was one of the earliest tea-trading facilities built in Liu Bao. The tea kiosk served as the tea-collecting station for five of the largest teahouses in the area, namely, The Wen’s, Wan Sheng (萬生), Tong Sheng (同盛), Yue Sheng (悅盛) and Xing Sheng (興盛). Many tea traders from other cities and local small retail businesses were also collecting teas in the town, but these five teahouses were the first ones to set up tea-collecting stations in Hekou Street. In addition to being a tea-collecting point, the kiosk also served as the Liu Bao branch of Guang Sheng Xiang Teahouse (廣生祥茶莊), a famous tea company with a history of more than 100 years.

Chen Yongchang, a tea expert who has already passed away, was the late owner of the tea kiosk. I interviewed him for two times in 2006 and 2007, as he recalled the good old days of Liu Bao tea. According to Chen, the Guang Sheng Xiang Teahouse was established in 1669 by the Liang family in Nanhai, Guangdong. At that time, the owner of the teahouse was Liang Dingyuan, a father of five sons. The teahouse was

profitable and had branches in Hong Kong and Heshan. Other than operating in the tea industry, the company was also trading other products.

At that time, Guangzhou was one of the ports opened for foreign trade, and tea was one of the products being exchanged. The Qing government set up many rules for foreign merchants, prohibiting them from entering the cities in China. Thus, foreign merchants could only purchase the tea leaves from local Chinese merchants, and it made the Thirteen Hongongs of Canton, the Di Shi Pu (第十甫) and the Shi Ba Pu (十八甫) the export center of the tea trade. There was also a Guang Sheng Xiang branch in the Thirteen Hongongs of Canton.

As mentioned above, many Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia during the middle of the Qing Dynasty, the sales level of Liu Bao tea in those countries, especially Malaysia, kept growing rapidly. As Liu Bao tea was becoming more and more popular in the market, its price had also increased. However, as the teas would often pass through several agents before arriving in Guangzhou, this business was not as profitable as the teahouses in Guangzhou wished. Facing this problem, Liang Tingfang, the third son of Liang Dingyuan and a clever businessman, decided to build a teahouse in Liu Bao. With the help of three employees, he finally set up Xing Sheng at Ma Lian Ping, which was actually a branch of the Guang Sheng Xiang Teahouse. According to Chen, the Liu Bao branch of the Guang Sheng Xiang Teahouse was established during the golden era of Liu Bao tea. At that time, Liu Bao teas were collected seven or eight times throughout the year. Essentially, tea leaves were almost being traded every day in the town. The turnover of the teahouse was great, and the business was highly profitable.

After living in Liu Bao for years, Liang Tingfang became a famous, well-respected person in town. Chen, a kid who often went to the teahouse to play, befriended Liang and would later be adopted as the godson of Liang. After growing up, Chen helped Liang operate the tea business, and he was mainly responsible for quality inspection. Years later, when Liang would go back to the head office during the New

Year or other Chinese festivals, the tea kiosk was managed by Chen. As Chen began learning the craft of producing and reviewing teas at a very young age, he could easily tell the quality of teas by looking and smelling the dried leaves, no matter if the teas were produced in Shizhai, Xiaoshui, Daning, Wudong or Gaosuo. He could tell the value of the teas accurately, and he never made a mistake throughout his career.

As the sales of Liu Bao tea was high, Xing Sheng could no longer satisfy the market demand solely by purchasing teas from tea growers. Thus, the teahouse decided to enter the tea-production industry and started buying fresh tea leaves directly from the growers. Every morning, tea growers brought freshly-picked tea leaves to the tea kiosk. At noon, the tea kiosk was crowded with tea growers coming from different tea villages. During the peak season, part-time workers were hired for the production process. At the same time, experts in tea production were also hired, to ensure the quality of teas produced.

During this period, there was a famous tea-producing master called “Guo” working for the teahouse. He was able to create more than 20 variations of tea products that would taste differently, using the same batch of tea leaves! In addition to producing teas, Guo was also responsible for grading the tea leaves, and also packaging the final products before they were transported to Guangzhou. Other than loose-leaf teas, Xing Sheng was also producing so-called “*Luopan* tea cakes” (a *Luopan* is a kind of compass widely used in Daoist geomancy, called “*feng shui*”; the tea cake was called this because its shape looked like a *Luopan*) and “tea pillars.” After completing the production process, a tea pillar would look like Hunan “*Qian Liang*” tea.

For tea pillars, bamboo strips were used to roll the tea leaves, in order to shape the tea cake. During production, several strong workers would step on the tea pillar and tighten the bamboo strips at the same time, in order to properly shape the pillar. After the tea was shaped, all the pillars were neatly organized in the factory, and Chen described this as a very beautiful picture. This whole procedure was very similar to that of Hunan *Qian Liang* tea—another kind of black tea.

The Tea Boat Road

In Liu Bao, most of the products were imported and exported by sea. Products exported through sea freight would firstly be transported to Li Bao on a small bamboo boat, and the goods would then be exported to other cities through a larger wood boat. As more and more goods were being transported from and to Jiangkou, Ducheng and Guangzhou, the demand for wood boats also increased. Thus, there were finally 13 large wood boats used for transporting goods in Liu Bao. This route was often called the “Tea Boat Road.”

In fact, there was also a “Tea Horse Road” in Liu Bao. The packhorses and porters, usually carrying tea leaves or local products of Liu Bao, would start their journey from the town, going to Xia Ying through the Du Village. The mountain road was steep and narrow, making it an extremely dangerous route. An old tea expert told me that the total distance of the “Tea Horse Road” was more than 130 *li* (里, or 65 kilometers). As the road was really steep, merchants had to

rely on packhorses and porters if they were looking to transport their goods through the “Tea Horse Road.” Besides this problem, there were sometimes robbers waiting for the porters! After arriving to Xia Ying, the goods would then be transported to Wuzhou by sea, and this was the easiest part of the journey.

Due to the increasing demand for necessities in Liu Bao, sea freight shipping, which was less efficient, did not have the capacity to transport all the goods. In addition to this factor, there was a large and active trading market in Wuzhou. All kinds of goods were being traded at reasonable prices in the market. Thus, many daily goods, including kerosene, salt, candy, biscuits, cigarettes and alcohol, were being transported by packhorses and porters from Wuzhou to Hekou Street. On the other hand, teas were also being transported from Liu Bao to Wuzhou through the “Tea Horse Road,” in order to satisfy the demand for restaurants, tea houses and tea drinkers in the Wuzhou area.

The tea-drinking habits of the people in Wuzhou and Guangdong were essentially the same. Studies suggest that there were more than ten tea restaurants in Wuzhou during the Ming Dynasty, and this number doubled in the late Qing Dynasty. There were both high-end and low-end tea restaurants in the city, making both rich businessmen and grassroots able to enjoy a delicious meal with a cup of tea. Those low-end tea restaurants, serving lower-quality tea with *dim sum*, such as buns, were highly popular among Wuzhou residents. Along with supplying the tea restaurants, Liu Bao teas were also sold in teahouses and grocery stores.

My father, Peng Yaoguang, told me that my grandfather, Peng Qirong, opened a grocery store called “The Rong’s (榮記)” outside the pier of Wu Fang Street. Aside from the store, my grandfather also operated a grocery boat. The boat would travel around the Guijiang River every day, supplying groceries, food and cooking oil, to people who lived their lives on boats.

茶 This collection station (tea kiosk) for tea is very old, though additions have been made. It is still used today.



My grandfather's grocery business focused on selling the most popular teas: Liu Bao tea and Hengzhou fine tea. Hengzhou fine tea was rolled up in paper into a tube with a diameter of 5.5 cm and a length of 18 cm. Each tube would weigh about 0.25 kilograms. Unlike Hengzhou fine tea, Liu Bao tea was sold as loose-leaf tea. Customers would tell my grandfather the amount of tea they were looking to buy, and my grandfather would then wrap the tea leaves using paper. My father told me that some dishonest businesses would use some heavier papers to wrap the tea, so that the tea sold would appear to weigh more than it actually did. In contrast to those grocery stores, my grandfather operated his business honestly. He would only use light bamboo paper to wrap tea for his customers. As people found him trustworthy, his business easily attracted customers.

At that time, Liu Bao tea was affordable even for the grassroots. Even an average household would buy some lower-grade Liu Bao teas to drink. Drinking teas were so popular that teas were more often consumed than water in the town. Before the Second Sino-Japanese War, most tea lovers would only choose between Liu Bao tea and Hengzhou fine tea. The tea industry became much more interesting after the wartime. For example, oolong tea or Lu'an tea were also served in the tea restaurants after the war ended.

Liu Bao tea and other necessities sold in my grandfather's store were usually purchased from Sha Street, a place in Wuzhou where the wholesalers of grocery products gathered. Sometimes, people from the villages would directly carry rice, Liu Bao tea or firewood to my grandfather's store, and the goods sold directly by the villagers would usually be cheaper. It was likely that the Liu Bao teas sold by these villagers were transported to Wuzhou through the "Tea Horse Road." In order to avoid being robbed, merchants would usually pass through the "Tea Horse Road" together, along with the security guards hired from the martial arts center in Wuzhou.

A Shrimp Fights with Tea

In the *Records of Cangwu County*, it says, "There is good tea being produced



茶 *Late nineteenth century boat used to carry Liu Bao tea to Guangzhou, from where it may travel far.*

茶
船
古
道

in Liu Bao. The tea has a rich taste, and the brewed tea does not turn sour overnight. There is a tea called "Xiadou" tea ("蝦鬥茶," literally "shrimp fights with tea"), which has great color, aroma and also taste. The only defect is that its taste is a little bit thin."

According to Chen Yongchang, Xiadou tea produced by Xing Sheng was one of tea drinkers' favorites, even though Xing Sheng did not produce teas in large scale. The business earned its reputation through producing the best products among tea factories. In fact, the tea was not originally called Xiadou tea. Instead, it was called "Xia Tou" tea ("下頭茶," the words "Xia Tou" are a description of the location of Liu Bao). The mistake was made due to language barriers between Liu Bao people and Cantonese people, as their accents were much different. Anyway, Xiadou tea produced by Xing Sheng and Guang Yuan Tai, another teahouse in Liu Bao, quickly became famous.

The tea expert went on to tell me that Ludi, Gongzhou and Heishi were among the best tea production regions

in Liu Bao. While high-quality teas were also produced in Lichong, Gongping and Shanping, teas produced in these areas were not as famous. In the northeast of Siliu, there is a mountain called Shuangji Mountain, which has an altitude of 750 meters. The teas produced in the valley of this mountain were highly appreciated by tea lovers. Chen told me that this tea had a strong yet mellow taste, and it had perfect color, aroma and taste.

In Liu Bao, there were even idioms praising how good the Liu Bao tea was. The teahouses in Guangdong and Hong Kong were almost looking to buy Heishi tea and Xiadou tea at any price, as these teas had already become very famous. Liang Tingfang of Guang Sheng Xiang investigated where the beloved Xiadou tea was produced. After realizing that it originated on Shuangji Mountain, he started purchasing the fresh tea leaves collected there. As Cantonese people were already used to the name of Xiadou tea, Liang did not correct this mistake even though it was incorrect and hilarious. At the same time, Guang Sheng Xiang was also

producing Heishi tea with the fresh tea leaves collected in Heishi. The upper class in Guangdong loved the teas so much that there was always a shortage in supply. Since then, Xiadou tea and Heishi tea have become two household names in Guangdong.

The tea leaves used to produce Xiadou teas were carefully chosen. The leaves must be small, the stem must not be too slim or too short, and the teas must be collected at high altitude. The season and time in which the teas were collected were also important. In addition to these factors in choosing tea leaves, Chen also shared with me the production process of the tea, which is often considered top secret at a tea factory. At that time, all Xiadou teas were produced by Guo, who had his own way of baking, *sha qing* (殺青) and steaming. No one in the factory was allowed to see how he performed these procedures. Without knowing the tricks of Guo, it would almost be impossible to make a tea that would taste like Xiadou tea. Later, Guo had an apprentice, who would end up becoming his son-in-law. In the town of Liu Bao, there were only four people who knew how to make Xiadou tea. Besides Chen, Guo and also his son-in-law, there was also a tea master who worked at Guang Yuan Tai who knew the tricks of making Xiadou tea, although it was unclear how this man learned the craft.

Chen honestly told me that due to the increasing demand for the tea, there was a shortage in the supply of tea leaves. Thus, leaves from Siliu, Lichong and Buyi were later used to make Xiadou tea, and Guo would monitor closely the collection of the tea leaves and the whole production process. However, the procedures of processing the tea leaves remained secret, as the profitability of the tea factory heavily depended on it! The secrets to making Xiadou tea were kept for a long time. There was a tea factory that tried to bribe Guo with a couple of gold bracelets, and it was refused by Guo. Years later, Guang Yuan Tai, another tea house that operated in Hekou, was able to make a Xiadou tea that was very similar to those made by Xing Sheng. It was never known why Guang Yuan Tai was able to make Xiadou tea, but the fact was that their teas also sold very well in Guangzhou.

During 1944, Guo's son-in-law left Liu Bao with his family, as the Japanese army was attacking southern China, and he never returned to Liu Bao. In the 1980s, it was known that Guo went to Guangzhou, before finally settling in Hong Kong, and he never leaked the secrets of Xiadou tea. On the other hand, the tea master in Guang Yuan Tai, who knew the craft of making Xiadou tea, was killed by a bomb.

Chen also told me that Xing Sheng would place tea certificates in each tea basket, which was the standard procedure of Guang Sheng Xiang. In order to avoid counterfeit products, the production of tea certificates was closely monitored, especially for the certificate of Xiadou tea. The teahouse would try not to produce more certificates than its actual production level. In the case that too many tea certificates were printed, the teahouse would count the number of residual certificates, to ensure that no certificate was stolen by the workers.

The tea certificates, and also the seal, were no longer in use after the teahouse ceased operations. In the 1980s, they were all burnt by Chen, since he believed that they had no use other than occupying space. Almost 1,000 kilograms of tea leaves were burnt together, and it took a whole night for Chen to burn everything to ashes!

Chen also shared another colorful story related to Xiadou tea. In the late autumn of 1936, Chen Lianzhong, a senior manager of HSBC, sent a person to Liu Bao for Xiadou tea. He was looking to buy 50 catties (or 25 kilograms) of the tea for 60 dollars per catty, which was way higher than the market value. It was later known that Chen Lianzhong was looking to give the teas to some senior government officials in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, thus he was willing to pay a high price for genuine products. Upon receiving the order, Guo was puzzled, because there was not a single gram of Xiadou tea in stock!

茶 Antique stamps that were put into Liu Bao baskets as trademark tickets that represented the brands.



As Liang, the owner of the Xing Sheng, went back to Guangzhou at that time, he had no one to ask for help. After calming down, Guo came up with the solution.

On the one hand, he asked the workers to bring the person sent by Chen Lianzhong to the casino and also to the brothel. At the same time, he bought Xiadou teas from Guang Yuan Tai at a high price, and he asked the workers to change the packaging of the teas bought. After working overnight, Xing Sheng was able to complete this profitable transaction! The news of someone buying teas for 3,000 dollars was soon heard by everyone, making the tea more famous than ever before. According to the *Records of Liu Bao*, the town flourished through tea and local product trading activities, and there was a total of ten rich families living in the town. Thirteen mansions were built by these families.

The Economy of Liu Bao

The casino that I mentioned above was operated by Wei Zhuochen, the head of the Liu Bao organization. There were two branches of the casino in the east and west of Hekou Street. Traditional Chinese casino games like Pai Gow, Fan Tan and Sic Bo were offered in the casino. Many tea merchants and tea growers would test their luck at the tables. There was also an opium den inside the casino. Along with the opium smokers, there were also young ladies massaging customers.

Wei was a man of wealth who owned a large mansion in the town. Before opening the casinos, he operated three stores on Hekou Street. Later, he started the Yuji Bank. Along with offering money exchange services, the bank would also purchase gold minerals from miners, as there were such minerals under the Liu Bao River. Years later, the government instructed the Yuji Bank to issue silver certificates, with the nominal value of 10 cents or 20 cents. The silver certificates were widely used in Liu Bao and also in its neighboring cities, essentially giving Wei the ability to control the economy of Liu Bao.

As the town became prosperous through the rapidly growing tea trade, Wei opened two casinos on Hekou

Street, and also a brothel. The brothel was extremely profitable, as it successfully attracted big spenders, such as tea merchants and other wealthy businessmen. The name and the location of the brothel are not known by us, and the *Records of Liu Bao* euphemistically call it a “club.” According to the *Records of Liu Bao*, the banking, timber and gambling businesses were all making money for Wei. He invested part of the money he earned to build a ferry, which would then travel between Wuzhou and Hong Kong. It was estimated that he made 50,000 dollars every year from this new business.

As a mountainous area, the production level of rice in Liu Bao was not sufficient to feed all the residents, especially with the large inflow of workers on Hekou Street. Chen told me that more than 200 buckets of rice and other foods would be transported from Dongan Village to Hekou Street every day. Dozens of buckets of cooking oil and rice would also be imported to Liu Bao from Shuikou and Gonghui of He County. At that time, there were six food retailers with offices in the town, namely Ritai, Heli, Youxin, Zhongji, Yingji and Lisheng. Adding the many other retailers who did not establish an office in the town, you may imagine how active the trade was.

As Liu Bao tea and other local products (such as bamboo, wood and charcoal) became more and more popular in other cities, farmers’ and tea growers’ living conditions improved. Along with living a better life, they also had the resources to attract workers from neighboring regions (including Xiaying, Wangfu, Zhangfa, Shizhai, Shiqiao, Libu and other villages near He County) to Liu Bao. Most of those workers would either work in the tea industry (as tea growers or tea collectors) or the timber industry. At that time, all businesses in the town was going very well.

In the bamboo-producing villages neighboring Liu Bao, women would make bamboo baskets and then sell them to teahouses in Liu Bao. Sometimes, these craftsmen would also take orders from teahouses to make tailor-made baskets for them. There were also merchants from Hunan selling iron woks, iron pots, slashers, sickles and hoes. At the same time, these merchants would purchase salt, kerosene

and other necessities from Liu Bao back to Hunan. Some traders would also buy resins in Hekou. The resins would need to be further processed before being sold in Guangdong. Many outsiders, especially the merchants from Guangdong, decided to open an office in Liu Bao as they were attracted by the business opportunities. Finally, there were merchants from Seiyap, Heshan, Yu’nan, Sanshui, Gaoming and Xinhui setting up offices in Liu Bao.

Besides the tea business, these merchants were also trading in bamboo and other local products. These offices were located in Hekou, Ma Lian Ping and Sanjie Zhou. An aged man from Jiu Cheng (a town in Liu Bao) told me that Jiu Cheng was also prosperous during this same period, not only because it was located on the Tea Boat Road, but also due to the fact that it was the starting point of bamboo and charcoal traffic. There were dozens of businesses operating there, including piece goods stores, candy stores and garment stores. Meanwhile, many people would take wood and bamboo to Jiu Cheng for further processing. For example, wood would be processed to make boats or charcoal, while bamboo would be used to make baskets, brooms, bags or other household items.

In addition to being a business center, Liu Bao had well-developed communication and business facilities, including a bank and also a post office. Goods were also being imported through the Tea Boat Road without hindrances. Chen Bochang, a tea expert, told me that his grandfather also opened a garment store in Jiu Cheng. Using a sewing machine imported from Germany, Chen’s grandfather made and repaired clothes for the villagers. Different sources show that even though the Communist Party started ruling China in 1949, there was still a total of 27 garment stores, blacksmith shops, barber shops, shoemakers and other handicraft businesses in the town at that time. Also, there were 35 grocery stores, teahouses, medicine stores, restaurants, and hostels in the town during the same period.

As the competition between teahouses and merchants was fierce, tea merchants adopted different strategies, in order to ensure that they could buy the best possible Liu Bao teas.

Some merchants would hire a “sub-owner” (essentially an agent) from Liu Bao, and they would rely on those agents to buy teas directly from the tea growers. According to Deng Zhao-ming, the then-village head of Liu Bao, some of the tea growers would directly carry the teas with them and trade with the teahouses at Hekou. On the other hand, some teahouses and tea merchants chose not to establish a tea-collecting station. Instead, they would hire agents to buy teas for them from different villages. Of course, the agents would make a commission, both from the tea growers and the teahouses. There were also other teahouses that did not hire these agents. They would hire tea experts from Guangdong to value the teas collected by different tea growers. After agreeing on the price, tea growers would then deliver the teas to the teahouse in Hekou. Later, there would be some businessmen in Liu Bao, who were not originally tea merchants, who would buy teas from the tea growers. After that, they would rent a boat and ship the teas to Yunan, Ducheng or other cities in Guangdong for sale.

The production and sales volume of Liu Bao tea peaked by the Second Sino-Japanese War. Reputable teahouses that set up an office in a factory in Liu Bao included Hong Kong Tian Shun Xiang Teahouse, Guang Yuan Tai, The Ying’s, Wan Sheng, The Wen’s, Xing Sheng of Guang Sheng Xiang, Tong Sheng, Guang Fu Tai, The Xin’s, Gong Sheng, The Sheng’s, Yuan Sheng, The Yong’s, Sheng Fa, etc. In addition, there were many small teahouses, sole traders and merchants who did not establish an office in the town. Statistics showed that between 1900 and 1940, goods exported from Wuzhou were mainly aniseed, pigs, tin, wood, pine and *tung* oil. It proves that most of the Liu Bao teas were not exported through Wuzhou. Instead, teas were transported to Guangzhou through sea freight, before being delivered to Hong Kong, the re-export center.

Shen Chang Zhan, a tea factory in Southeast Asia (which produced the famous Four Gold Coins Tea and Double Gold Coins Tea), also claimed that it had set up a tea-collecting station in Hekou in 1912. However, I was not able to confirm this through asking the tea experts in Liu Bao, or

through studying the *Records of Liu Bao*. It was possibly due to the fact that Shen Chang Zhan formed a joint venture with another teahouse, and the business did not run under its own name in Liu Bao. Another tea expert suggested that Shen Chang Zhan set up a factory in Chen Cun, a town near Guangzhou, and Liu Bao teas were produced there and then exported to Southeast Asia countries.

In the late Qing Dynasty, Liu Bao tea was becoming more and more famous in Hong Kong, Macao and Southeast Asia. Surely, the demand of this tea was huge in these regions. According to Li Xuqiu, a tea expert who was already in his nineties, his grandmother told him that Hong Kong Tian Shun Xiang Teahouse, Guang Yuan Tai and other famous teahouses had already set up offices in Liu Bao during this period. Li told me that he could still remember that the name of each teahouse would be written on the pillar outside its building. He also confirmed that the logo of the teahouse would be drawn on each of the baskets used to transport teas.

At that time, Hong Kong Tian Shun Xiang and Guang Yuan Tai were two of the most famous and largest teahouses. Both of the teahouses had branches in Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Guang Yuan Tai even opened a branch in Ipoh, a city located in Southeast Asia. Guang Yuan Tai was established in the Qing Dynasty, during the Qianlong Emperor (1736–1795). The business originated in Quanzhou of Fujian Province. There is a colorful story about the establisher of this teahouse.

The father of Guang Yuan Tai’s establisher was selected to be a government official through the imperial examination system. After working in the government for a few years, his career path was not smooth, and he finally resigned from his post. Afterwards, he ordered his offspring to be businessmen and not to walk the path that he walked. Obeying the order of his father, the man set up Guang Yuan Tai in Quanzhou. In 1757, after the export ports in Fujian were closed down by the Qing government, the teahouse was relocated to the Thirteen Hongs of Canton in Guangzhou. Since then, Guang Yuan Tai focused on the tea business. The business was well-

operated, and in the late Qing Dynasty, the teahouse was already famous for its excellent product quality. Branches were opened in Hong Kong and in Southeast Asia. The Liu Bao teas produced by the teahouse sold very well, and the products were popular in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Macao and other regions.

Later, the teahouse would classify its products into four grades, namely *Saicha* (細茶), *Yuandu* (元度 or 原度), *Cucha* (粗茶) and *Xingdeng* (行等). The teahouse also created a unique *nei fei* for its products. On the *nei fei*, there was a Chinese slogan printed to promote its products (“天寶物華名茶世家省港聯號百年製茶廣選精作元度細茶泰和順雅品質尤嘉爰憑印鑑謹識無差毋致偽假,” which roughly means “A famous teahouse that operates in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, with more than 100 years of experience in tea-making, carefully producing precious products with excellent skills. The tea is great quality, and it has a mellow, smooth and elegant taste. Please distinguish between the real and fake products by looking at the company seal”). The name of the teahouse was also printed in the middle of the *nei fei*. In addition, each of the *nei fei* would also be sealed, so that the consumers could distinguish between the genuine and counterfeit products. The packaging was innovative, leading other teahouses to copy this idea.

In Liu Bao, Guang Yuan Tai set up a large office. It was known that Guang Yuan Tai was often willing to purchase teas at a price higher than others, and would always purchase large amounts. Due to its craft in the tea production process, Liu Bao teas produced by the teahouse was unique. As the teahouse described it, it had a “mellow, smooth and elegant taste,” which attracted tea lovers in China and overseas.

The Liu Bao Office Fire

The hot-selling Liu Bao tea undoubtedly improved the living conditions of the local tea growers. Official statistics suggest that a stellar amount of more than 700,000 cattles (or 350,000 kilograms) of Liu Bao teas were sold in 1935, which is amazing for such a small area compared to other tea-growing regions of China.

Li Xuqiu, an experienced tea expert, told me that as the tea traded by merchants and sole proprietors who did not establish an office were not counted by the government, the official statistics would tend to underestimate the actual volume of Liu Bao teas being produced and sold. He estimated that 800,000 catties (or 400,000 kilograms) of tea leaves were exported from Liu Bao during that year. As a comparison, Guangxi, as a whole, had exported 2,250,000 catties (or 1,125,000 kilograms) of tea leaves during this same period.

In 1931, the civil defense corps was organized by Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi, and many villagers in Guangxi joined the corps. The objective of the corps was to recruit members, ideally volunteers, and train them to be soldiers and commanders. They hoped that through organizing the corps, local defense forces could be set up, which was also a means to achieving political autonomy and, ideally, a self-sufficient economy.

In the summer of 1936, Shao Zhiqiang, the village head of Liu Bao, started to think about ways to take the money away from the tea growers who were becoming rich. As a result, he set up a military conscription policy in the town. Many teenagers in Liu Bao were then drafted to the civil defense corps through drawing lots, and those who were drafted could be exempted from military service by donating 1,000 or 2,000 kilograms of grain. In order to avoid serving in the corps, most of the villagers chose the option of donating grain. Many tea growers then became poor once again.

Even though most of the tea growers were not well educated, they were relatively well-informed, since they had been conducting business with Guangdong people in the cities for quite a long time. They knew that they were being treated unfairly, and they decided to organize a protest against the village head. Around 300 villagers gathered in Hekou, with Chen Xiongjie and Wei Jingping as the leaders. The village office was surrounded by the protesters the next night. Holding torches, the protesters were planning to break into the village office and catch Shao, the village head.

Many teachers and students were living in the village office, as the of-

fice building was also used as a school. Hiding his face behind a rice bucket, Shao successfully escaped from the village office, as the protesters thought he was a teacher or a student. Failing to see Shao after waiting for a long time, the protesters finally realized that he had already left. The angry protesters burned the village office with kerosene, and this incident has been called the "Village Office Fire" since then.

Li Xuqiu told me another story. In 1937, China was being invaded by Japan. Due to the lack of information flow, people failed to realize how bad the situation was. Two of the tea masters of Guang Yuan Tai, who were responsible for purchasing teas, were in Liu Bao at that time. In October 1938, Guangzhou fell to Japan, and it became impossible for ships to leave Xijiang.

Failing to communicate with their families and company, the two tea masters had no choice but to stay in Liu Bao. But they were not alone. Many tea masters from other teahouses were also forced to stay in Liu Bao, along with the large volume of teas that they purchased. During this period, they were often blackmailed by the local gangsters who were not only targeting their money, but also looking to rob them of their tea leaves. In 1945, the tea masters in Guang Yuan Tai left Liu Bao and sold the tea leaves that they had been keeping for seven years. Unexpectedly, these aged tea leaves sold extremely well in the market, and the market price for this batch of tea was four times higher than usual. This story, which was verified by several Liu Bao tea experts, shows that tea drinkers at that time had already realized that aged Liu Bao tea is better.

The King of Tea Trees

There was a legend among the tea growers in Liu Bao: On the mountaintop of Heishi Mountain, there was an old, old tea tree, which was called the "King of Tea Trees," as it was the ancestor of all other tea trees in Liu Bao. According to one legend, the Queen Mother of Heaven visited Earth with her fairies. During the trip, a heavenly seed was planted, which would grow into the King of Tea Trees in Liu Bao. Aside from this beautiful story, there

was another legend related to the God of Tea, which is, perhaps, not as colorful as the previous one. It is said that the King of Tea Trees is the embodiment of the God of Tea, who has protected the well-being of people in Liu Bao since ancient times. And, of course, the fate of the town is also in the hands of the God of Tea. Liu Bao people believed that the tea leaves collected from this tree did not only have a unique flavor, but also had the power to cure any otherwise incurable diseases.

In the past, there was no such thing as a clinic or hospital in Liu Bao. People could only rely on prayer and the magical tea tree to cure their diseases. People from the tea town would sometimes leave their home to go to the Heishi Mountain late at night. After drinking the teas brewed by the leaves collected from the King of Tea Trees, many patients recovered. Such cases were wide-spread by word-of-mouth, and surely, the stories soon became more colorful than the facts. Whether it was a coincidence or the power of God was not really important, as the fact was that most of the elderly in Liu Bao believed that the King of Tea Trees was the embodiment of the God of Tea, who was responsible for managing everything related to teas on Earth. It was also believed that the God of Tea was protecting their welfare.

In the 1930s, a temple was built in Tongping, a town near the Heishi Mountain, to worship the God of Tea. Two rituals, during spring and autumn, were held every year to give thanks to the God of Tea. Deng Zhao-ming, the then-village head of Liu Bao, confirmed that such a tree had actually existed, as he saw it himself. He said that the tree was located near the mountaintop, and it was growing from cracks in the rocks. According to Deng, the diameter of the tree was about 30 centimeters, and the location of the tree made it extremely difficult and dangerous to collect its leaves. People who climbed down the cliff to collect the leaves from this magical tree were tied with a rope.

Led by tea experts in Heishi Village, I visited the Heishi Mountain several times, attempting to search for the location where the King of Tea Trees was. One of the experts told me that the tree had been there since ancient times, growing strong stems from

cracks in the rocks. Its leaves had a unique and great taste, and the leaves could be brewed for many times. It was believed that many of the tea trees grown around the region were the offspring of this tea tree. He added that the teas leaves collected from the King of Tea Trees were great, as Lu Yu, who was respected as the Sage of Tea, also suggested that good tea trees were grown in loose, rocky soil in the *Tea Sutra*.

I also interviewed Chen Zhendong, who was the manager of the tea export organization in Liu Bao. While he had never seen the King of Tea Trees himself, he recalled that many villagers would go to the Heishi Mountain to collect the leaves from the tree, regardless of how dangerous it was, as people deeply believed in the magical healing power of the tree.

In 1959, the period when the Great Leap Forward was happening, Chen was the secretary to the People's Commune in Liu Bao. During a committee meeting, Yi Xiecheng, one of the committee members, announced that he had already chopped down the old tea tree of the Heishi Mountain. Yi claimed that not only would the villagers go to collect the tea leaves on the cliff without considering their own safety, but they would also spread the superstition about how the tea leaves could cure diseases after they came back. He believed that in order to stop the superstitious villagers, and also to protect their well-being, he had no choice but to chop down the tree.

Many were possibly shocked and saddened, both by his actions and by the sudden death of the tea tree, though no one said anything about

this incident, as it would possibly be considered as politically incorrect at that time. Except for those who attended the meeting, almost no one knew what happened. People would only realize later that the King of Tea Trees was "gone." Deng Zhaoming said that it would be extremely difficult, if possible, to chop the tree down. Still, Yi did it, and the tree was forever gone. Deng believed that if the 1,000-year-old tea tree was still living now, it would be heavily protected instead of being chopped down. However, "destroying superstition" and "protecting the public" were very strong reasons in 1959. What a pity!



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茶 A drawing from an old book of a Liu Bao teahouse, with various aged teas on the shelves and people shopping, drinking tea and socializing.



PROCESSING OF LIU BAO TEA

六堡茶工藝



Continuing our tour of the six castles, we get to the most in-depth account of Liu Bao processing ever written. This article is incredibly important to the Liu Bao lover, as it explains in great detail all the steps of Liu Bao processing, as well as the methods used over time. We have covered this in our Tea of the Month articles over the last two years, but never in such amazing detail as Mr. Peng.



茶人: Peng Qing Zhong

Stories of Liu Bao, the Tea Town

Liu Bao tea processing techniques have come a long way over the years, and have traveled an interesting course in their development. Despite this, there is a lack of research into this topic, and materials are somewhat scarce. So, in this article, I have gathered together some knowledge of Liu Bao processing techniques, recorded from the memories of the older generations of local Chajin from Liu Bao itself, so that we might delve into the evolution of this tea and the factors behind it.

Firstly, a brief summary of Liu Bao tea's earliest roots. One school of academic opinion that's considered fairly authoritative describes the evolution of tea styles as follows: In the Tang Dynasty, tea leaves took the form of steamed green tea cakes. At this time, the well-known tea saint Lu Yu classified tea into four kinds, according to the brewing method: "coarse" tea, loose-leaf tea, powdered tea (*matcha*) and tea cakes. Then, during the Song Dynasty, steamed green tea cakes evolved into steamed green loose-leaf tea. The Song Dynasty saw a proliferation of different types of tribute tea, from flat-leafed "tablet-shaped" tea (片茶) to the foamy white *la mian* (臘面) tea. Loose-leaf tea was also a product of the Song Dynasty. By the time of the Yuan Dynasty, tea cakes had gradually been phased out, and loose-leaf varieties developed even more. The Song and Yuan dynasties were a golden age for the tea industry in southern China. It's said that in the Liu Bao region (which was not yet named Liu Bao at the time), tea production methods also changed, coming to resemble the popular steamed green tea meth-

ods. The older and coarser leaves were used to make the tea cakes that were popular at the time (one tea producer in Guangxi, Xiuren, during the Song Dynasty was known for tea cakes). The young shoots were used to make green tea according to conventional methods. By the Ming Dynasty, tea leaves began to shift away from pure green tea production methods, and the first "fermentation" techniques began to emerge. Throughout their long-time experience of harvesting and processing tea, people noticed that fermented tea had a unique character, and that different fermentation methods created different styles of tea; thus red, yellow and black teas were created. Liu Bao tea (六堡茶), made using early black tea processing methods, is likely to have originated during this era at the earliest.

Early Song Dynasty

In the early Song Dynasty, a book entitled *Records of a Peaceful World* (太平寰宇記) was published in 987 BCE, the fourth year of the Yongxi era during the reign of the Emperor Taizong (revised edition by Wang Wenchu, Zhonghua Book Company, 2007). This book details the geography, scenery and local products of various regions; the 164th entry on local products from the then-prefecture of Fengzhou in southern China contains a reference to "Spring Purple Bamboo Shoot Tea" and "Summer Purple Bamboo Shoot Tea." The name Purple Bamboo Shoot or *zisun* (紫笋) comes from a line in Lu Yu's *Tea Sutra* (*Cha Jing*,

茶經) that reads: "Purple is superior; bamboo shoots are superior." The most famous of these teas was Guzhu Purple Bamboo Shoot tea, which was offered to the imperial household as a tribute tea for around 80 years during the Tang Dynasty. In the year 843, during the Huichang era, around 10 metric tons of Purple Bamboo Shoot tea were given as tribute; the royal household erected stone tablets engraved with the volume of the tribute. From the Tang Dynasty, and throughout the Song and Yuan through to the late Ming, this tea was given as a royal tribute tea for a total of 876 years. Among China's tribute teas, Guzhu Purple Bamboo Shoot tea can claim a lot of superlatives: It's the tribute tea with the longest history, was produced on the largest scale and in the greatest volume, and was of the finest quality. Guzhu Mountain Purple Bamboo Shoot tea has a very unique characteristic that earned it its name: the shoots are purplish and resemble bamboo shoots in shape. So, the Spring and Summer Purple Bamboo Shoot teas that we saw listed as local products of Fengzhou in the early Song Dynasty likely also shared similar characteristics and would have been of fine quality.

Records indicate that the two former counties of Fengchuan and Kaijian covered roughly the same territory as today's Fengkai County in Guangdong. So, the Fengzhou referred to in the Song Dynasty records is likely the area of modern-day Fengkai. Some time ago, in hopes of verifying this, I traveled to modern-day Fengkai County in Guangdong, along with some Chajin from Liu Bao,

to visit some tea mountains and plantations in the area. These included the Fengkai Dazhou Tea Plantation, the Hongfeng Tea Plantation (out of operation since the 1980s), the Qilin Tea Plantation and the Xinghua Baima Tea Plantation. During our visit, we noticed that the original Liu Bao tea plant varietal only grew in the areas between the Liu Bao and the He rivers ancient tea boat route, including places such as Libu, Mushuang and Dazhou. On the other hand, tea mountains that were further from the river, such as the Baima Plantation, only had local tea plant varieties growing there, and none of the Liu Bao varietal. The tea plants growing in Fengkai today can be broadly categorized into two varieties. The first is the tree-shaped large-leaf variety, of which the oldest trees are around 60–70 years old. These plants do not display purple shoots. The second variety is markedly different from those growing on the Baima tea mountains—this is the bush-shaped Liu Bao tea plant variety, which grows along the old tea boat route. Introduced more recently, these trees tend to be on the younger side and are generally no older than forty years or so.

At the Qilin Tea Plantation, the elderly Chajin told us that there wasn't anywhere nearby producing tea in large quantities, so the tea they produced was supplied to the neighboring areas. When they were young, they most often drank Liu Bao tea, and they don't remember their elders ever having mentioned other tea producers in the region. These days, in Fengkai's tea plantations, the Liu Bao tea plant variety is referred to as *cha'er* (茶儿). During the planned economy era in the 1960s and 1970s, these plants were introduced from Liu Bao to Guangxi and cultivated locally to stimulate growth in the tea industry. From observing the tea mountain plantations, we noticed that the native large-leaf varietals did not have purple shoots, nor did the tea from Baima. As for the more recently introduced Liu Bao *cha'er* varietals, there were also relatively few purple-shoot variants among them; this is likely due to the local soil conditions and micro-climate. The local manufacturing techniques used for this tea also differ significantly from those used in the Liu Bao tea region. Evidently, these Liu Bao varietals

were also introduced to other parts of Guangdong in modern times, such as Huaji, Yu'nan and Deqing counties, but purple or red shoots are also scarce in these plantations.

From ancient times, the tea grown in Wu Bao and Liu Bao (literally “Five Castles” and “Six Castles”) in Cangwu County, Guangxi, was transported to what is now Fengkai along the Xijiang River, since the land routes were mountainous and difficult to travel. This route became known as the “Old Tea Boat Road,” and supplied tea to the inhabitants of places such as Libu, Fengzhou in Guangdong, Yu'nan, Zhaoqing and Deqing. Moreover, the original Liu Bao varietal tea plants grown in Siliu, Buyi and Heishi display a greater proportion of red and purple shoots. So, this does indicate that the Spring and Summer Purple Bamboo Shoot tea referred to in the *Song Dynasty Records of a Peaceful World* were likely grown in the Liu Bao region and transported down the river to Fengzhou. From the fact that the locals began calling this local tea after the well-known Guzhu Mountain Purple Bamboo Shoot tribute tea that it resembled, we can surmise that it was of excellent quality.

Into the Song Dynasty

Although steamed green tea cakes made with coarse leaves were common in the Song Dynasty, there are also records of another type of tea that was made with quite different techniques. One such record appears in a poem by Zheng Gangzhong (鄭剛中), a famous poet and official who opposed the Jin Dynasty. One of his poems, written in a traditional structure with seven-syllable lines, is prefaced by the following: “I am very fond of tea. There is a rare and excellent variety found in Fengzhou, with a unique bitterness and astringency similar to low-grade Xiuren tea, of which I drink two cups a day.” The poem itself evokes the image of the poet sitting down to a humble meal and a simple cup of tea. The descriptions of the tea in this poem and its preface merit further research, as they offer us an insight into the characteristics and manufacturing techniques of Liu Bao tea during this period—not to mention inspiration.

Another record can be found in a work by Southern Song geographer Zhou Qufei (周去非), *Questions from Beyond the Mountains*, in the section on “Tea” in the “Food” chapter: “The tea produced in Xiuren County in Jingjiang Prefecture is made into rectangular tea bricks by the locals. The finest examples are two-inch squares and quite thick, bearing the characters “Offered to the Immortals” (供神仙, *gong shen xian*). The second best are five- to six-inch squares and are quite thin; while the humblest are large, coarse and thin. The Xiuren name is very well known. When brewed and drunk, the liquor is dark in color and heavy in flavor, and can relieve headaches.” The Xiuren (修仁) tea referred to here is a well-known Song Dynasty tea, produced in Xiuren Village in Lipu County, in the Guilin City Prefecture. So, when Zheng Gangzhong likened the tea he drank to “low-grade Xiuren tea,” this suggests that the tea in question was made with coarse, older leaves, was of a lower quality, and was compressed into thin cakes, similar in appearance to less-refined Xiuren tea. What's more, take a look at this description: coarse, older leaves compressed into tea cakes, that produce bitter, astringent tea and take on a dark color after aging—is this not an exact description of the old Liu Bao tea cakes that we know today? From the Tang and Song dynasties, Liu Bao tea was made by steaming to halt oxidation (a process known as “kill-green”), then compressing the tea into cakes. Because of the high concentration of tea polyphenols in Liu Bao tea plants and the high water content during steaming, Liu Bao tea cakes turn a dark blackish-brown color after being stored for a relatively short period. Thus, it takes on the qualities of being “dark in color and heavy in flavor,” a unique characteristic of Liu Bao that sets it apart from other teas.

Even today, in the homes of local Liu Bao people, one occasionally comes across this kind of tea cake made with old, coarse leaves, stored by hanging them up in front of the stove. The words of Zheng Gangzhong offer an interesting clue: he describes the tea as “a rare and excellent variety found in Fengzhou.” Could we, then, interpret this to mean that the tea was not produced in Fengzhou itself, but rather, found in a market, after a lengthy



Kill-green & drying



Sorting



Painting tea boxes



Compressing the tea in the boxes



Weighing the tea



Storing the tea

search? After all, if the tea was locally produced, it was unlikely to be “rare” or hard to find. This evidence supports the theory that the tea in Fengzhou during this period was indeed grown in the Liu Bao region and transported along the river, to be sold in Fengzhou and the surrounding areas.

Loose-Leaf Tea

Loose-leaf tea appeared in the Yuan Dynasty, and it gradually became popular with tea makers throughout the Yuan and Ming dynasties, especially in the south of China. The Liu Bao region was no exception. From the beginning of the Ming Dynasty through to the Qing, it gradually became accepted practice for China’s various tea-producing regions to make tea according to their own methods, building on the intrinsic qualities of the local leaf and giving rise to a proliferation of unique

styles of tea. From the Ming and Qing onwards, the process of tea making has been based on traditional methods, handed down through the generations. Generally speaking, the tea growers did the work of harvesting and initial processing (kill-green and drying), before selling the tea to merchants, to be transported to various destinations. As the scale of Liu Bao production increased, tea merchants from the local areas or from Guangdong set up facilities in Liu Bao to collect and distribute the tea. During this period, young Liu Bao tea, with its strong, bitter and astringent qualities, came to enjoy a certain popularity. Tea from the Liu Bao tea plant varietal is characterized by its very high tea polyphenol content, its rich quality, its strong flavor and its bitter astringency when the tea is young. But, after several years of aging, the bitterness and astringency mellow out, giving way to a smooth, rich, red-colored tea that is highly es-

teemed by many drinkers. But how could a tea merchant, who is running a business and needs to maintain a high turnover of goods, possibly wait eight or ten years to sell their tea? To address this need, Liu Bao production methods had to adapt.

One of Liu Bao’s elderly tea growers, Li Xuqiu (李旭秋), now in his nineties, recalls that when he was eight years old, his grandmother recounted that in *her* youth, some of the locally produced Liu Bao tea was sent to Guangzhou for further processing before being exported to places such as Hong Kong, Macau and Southeast Asia. (To estimate from both their ages, this would have been around the 1880s, during the Yuan Dynasty.) But from Li Xuqiu’s own earliest memories, the entire Liu Bao manufacturing process was already completed locally from start to finish, with only the final packaging happening in Guangzhou before shipping the tea off for sale.

KILL-GREEN

The kill-green step in Liu Bao tea processing was carried out to halt oxidation according to traditional methods, and involves immersing the leaves in boiling water, steaming and pan-firing. This is done at relatively low temperatures, to prepare the tea for the “post-fermentation” process that will follow later. The older, seasoned tea farmers would turn the leaves over in the wok using their hands, in order to get a feel for the temperature and adjust it accordingly. There are several different kill-green techniques in traditional Liu Bao processing. Some special styles of tea, such as Lao Cha Po (“Grandma Tea”), with its old, thick leaves, are not suited to other kill-green methods, so the traditional techniques of immersing in water (*lao shui*, 捞水) and steaming (*zheng qi*, 蒸汽) are still used today.

The details of Liu Bao manufacturing in its early days are recorded in *A Brief History of Guangxi's Local Products*, edited by Wu Zunren (吴尊任) and published in 1937: “During the daytime, the leaves are picked and put in a basket. At nightfall, the leaves are fired in a cauldron until they are very soft; when moisture

becomes visible and the leaves begin to stick together, they are taken out. Before the leaves become too cold, they are kneaded with an implement and rolled until they shrink into small, thin shapes and are ready to be used.” This record basically describes the kill-green (*sha qing*, 殺青), rolling (*rou nian*, 揉拈) and drying steps. In this case, the kill-green step is achieved through pan-firing. There’s also another record, believed to come from Guangxi University’s weekly journal in 1930, that describes the art of Liu Bao manufacturing at that time: “Each tea bud is picked along with three to five leaves. The initial processing method is as follows: After picking, the leaves are immersed in boiling water, until they are soft and flexible. After about five minutes, they are put in a basket and compressed by trampling with the feet, until the leaves are sufficiently rolled up. Then, the leaves are dried by roasting over a fire. Once dry, they are steamed until soft, then put into baskets ready for sale.” This process of immersing leaves in boiling water is presumably the aforementioned *lao shui* (捞水) kill-green method, seldom used in later times. This old-style *lao shui* meth-

od of boiling the leaves is still used in Liu Bao’s tea villages, though; these days, it is mostly used for Lao Cha Po (“Grandma Tea”) and other varieties made with coarse, older leaves.

According to the recollections of the region’s elderly Chajin, when production volumes were high, the workshops struggled to keep up with demand using traditional techniques, so they began to use the *lao shui* kill-green method for older leaves. Later, however, steaming became more common as a kill-green method. In 1957, the Guangxi Province Supply and Marketing Cooperative released a publication entitled *Tea Picking and Processing Methods*, with a section on Liu Bao tea that contains the following excerpt: “Some tea farmers...pack the raw leaves into a handle-less basket or sieve and put the basket inside a pot of boiling water, then place a lid on the pot to steam the leaves... Some tea farmers will place around twenty-five to thirty kilograms of raw leaves inside a wooden steamer basket to steam.” So, we can see that in the 1950s, the traditional method of steaming to achieve kill-green was still prevalent; these days, people are tending more



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towards pan-firing, and steaming is not much advocated anymore. A Liu Bao tea-processing manual from this period contains this warning: “When carrying out the kill-green step, be aware of the following: It is important not to use the method of “soaking” (*shui lao*, 水潦) to achieve kill-green, because the active chemical compounds in the leaves can dissolve into the water, thereby greatly reducing the quality of the leaf.” (Here, *shui lao* is a different name for the same *lao shui* technique). So, it appears that tea manufacturers of this period were already aware of the deficiencies of boiling and steaming as

kill-green methods, and had begun to avoid them.

The image on the previous page is from a book entitled *A Study of 19th Century Chinese Pith Paper Watercolors for Overseas Sale*. The book contains a series of watercolor paintings on pith paper that portray the steps in the tea manufacturing process during the Qing Dynasty. Another set of illustrations entitled *The Tea Workshop* (top of p. 44) depicts several tea-processing steps, including pan-firing, sorting, sifting, packaging the leaves and drinking the tea. This painting offers us an overview of the tea-making pro-

cess and the associated tools during the Qing Dynasty. At the time, these watercolor paintings from Guangzhou depicting Chinese customs sold well in Europe and North America, and many have been preserved to present day. Several traditional processing methods have been passed down to modern times, from the mid-Qing to the period leading up to the Sino-Japanese War (which began in 1937). Traditional Liu Bao manufacturing methods continued to improve, giving rise to the six archetypal methods detailed below. (“Baking” here refers to the process of drying the leaves over a fire.)

Method One: Kill-green → First rolling → First baking → Second rolling (around five times) → Second baking (95% dry) → Air-drying

Method Two: Kill-green → First rolling → First baking → Second rolling (around five times) → Second baking (70% dry) → Place leaves in a basket, sealed with a bamboo winnowing pan for a lid, until the following morning → Final baking until 95% dry → Air-drying

Method Three: Kill-green → First rolling → First baking → Second rolling (two or three times) → Piling to ferment (the time varies according to the air temperature and the tenderness of the leaves) → Final rolling → Baking to dry

Method Four: Kill-green → First rolling → Piling → First baking (around 50% dry) → Second rolling (several times) → Baking to dry

Method Five: Kill-green → First rolling → Piling → First baking → Re-moistening → Piling in baskets (baskets may be flipped or rotated during this time) → Second baking (or airing) until dry

Method Six: Kill-green → First rolling → Piling → Second rolling → Baking → Steaming twice or several times and compressing into baskets to dry → Air-drying

Method Seven: Some special styles of tea, such as Grandma Tea and Xiadou tea (蝦鬥茶), have their own special processing methods. According to the teachings of Chen Yongchang (陳永昌), the process for Xiadou tea is as follows:

Xiadou Tea Method: Kill-green → Initial rolling → Warm piling → Second rolling → Steaming while sealed in a special tea cauldron → Removing from the steamer → Second baking → Covering the leaves with thin sandpaper and leaving overnight → Turning the leaves over → Second steaming → Baking until 90% dry → Air-drying



This skillful process involves using rolls of sandpaper to determine the temperature and humidity level, and to carefully adapt the process to the weather conditions of the day, considering the temperature, humidity and whether the sky is clear or overcast. It requires the tea maker to work with the spirit of the weather and control the length of the process; there is even a special set of tea-making implements for this method. As for Grandma Tea, the processing methods are rather diverse and can involve either steaming or boiling (*lao shui*). Li Xuqiu once taught me his own method, developed through trial and error, for making Grandma Tea. The elderly Chajin told me that the steaming method used for the kill-green step in Grandma Tea could use some improvement, and should be done with special tools; he also invented his own unique steaming method. His method produced a unique tea that was very pleasant to drink, full of fragrance, with a strong, fresh, pure flavor. There are several

names in Chinese for the piling process, including *ou dui* (漚堆), *wo dui* (渥堆), *yan dui* (罨堆) and *dui men* (堆悶)—the latter is now generally considered standard. This process first began in the mid-Qing Dynasty when the Liu Bao tea production was on the rise, and large volumes of tea leaves were packed into baskets or heaped in a corner after being rolled, to await the next step: drying the leaves over a fire. The piling process gradually evolved from there and was passed down over time.

In rural tea workshops, the *dui men* process is carried out after rolling by heaping the leaves on wooden floorboards or in bamboo baskets. Young, tender leaves are generally piled to a height of 25–45 cm, while older, coarser leaves can reach 50–90 cm. Higher ambient temperatures call for a slightly thinner layer of tea, while colder conditions require thicker, taller piles. The piles of tea are generally left for around 16–36 hours, with shorter times for young leaves and longer

times for old leaves. In addition, thicker piles require slightly shorter times, and thinner piles require longer. So, tea makers need to have a good grasp of these factors and adjust the process accordingly; they also need to turn the leaves over once or twice, judging by the degree of fermentation. If the temperature within the piles of tea reaches 55 °C, the leaves must be turned over immediately to dispel the heat; if the temperature drops to 30 °C, the tea must be gathered up into thicker heaps and left for an appropriate amount of time. During the initial drying phase, when the leaves are heated over a fire, the degree of drying is also important—when picking up a handful of tea, the leaves should easily form a ball without falling apart, but should not be damp to the touch. Then comes the re-moistening step, which must be carefully monitored; the leaves must be uniformly soft, so that gently squeezing a handful of leaves does not produce any crackling sounds. These days, the local tea farmers tend to use Meth-

茶 *Right: In the early days of Liu Bao production, the sha qing (殺青) was done with steam in pine drums like this one. This lends old Liu Bao a very unique flavor. Many scholars think that this continued until 1958.*

Upper Left: A traditional wooden rolling machine for rolling Liu Bao tea that breaks the cells down and shapes the tea. A person would stand on either end and pull back and forth, while another pushed the tea down. In this way, the tea was properly rolled.

Lower Left: This is a mold for making tea bricks (茶磚), which the merchants who established themselves at Hekou in Liu Bao created to cater to a different niche in the market. In the late Qing Dynasty, there were also other types, such as tea discs, Liu An baskets, and Hua Juan (花轉, Flower Roll) tea, wrapped in bamboo tubes.

Left: Larger drums for steaming Liu Bao tea for the sha qing. These drums are on display in a modern-day Liu Bao factory. The owners state that they date to the year 1950, when that process was on the verge of shifting.



od One from the list above for processing Liu Bao. Some techniques are passed down the generations as secret knowledge from the old tea masters and are not revealed to outsiders. After a certain amount of aging, the tea they produce becomes rich, strong and fragrant, and is sure to light up the eyes of any drinker. Despite this, some of the ancient tea-making techniques are already common knowledge in the area and are on the verge of disappearing.

Compression & Drying

Bamboo is abundant in the Liu Bao region; this gave rise to the large woven bamboo baskets used for steaming Liu Bao. These baskets became a unique, convenient and affordable method of packaging the tea. But there were some drawbacks: each basket couldn't hold a large volume of tea, especially with medium-grade or coarser tea leaves; plus, the leaves tended to become crushed during shipping. This damage could be

very costly, especially when the tea had to be transported long distances along the Old Tea Boat Road, all the way to Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macau and even Southeast Asia. To solve this, tea merchants invented a technique that involved compressing the leaves into baskets to air-dry after steaming them. Firstly, the merchants would sort the leaves they had purchased into four different grades, such as superior, fine, regular and coarse. (Other merchants used categories such as high grade, medium grade, and low grade.) Then they would pick out the yellow leaves, sift off the tea dust, steam the leaves to soften them and pack them into the baskets. Depending on the coarseness of the leaves, this technique allowed them to pack 2.5–5 times as much tea into the same-sized basket compared to before. This greatly reduced the space needed for shipping and eliminated the losses that resulted from crushed tea leaves. The tea merchants also quickly realized that packaging new Liu Bao tea in this way also made for a richer, mellower

tea when aged; this steam compressing technique was established as a unique part of the Liu Bao tea manufacturing process.

As the technique evolved, variations were invented, such as the “twice-steamed, twice-dried” and the “many steamings, many dryings” methods. There are other names for these traditional methods, including “double-steaming” and “multi-steaming.” In recent times, people have taken to using the phrase “twice-steamed, twice-sundried” as well—this one is incorrect, as Liu Bao tea has never been sundried. In the 1970s and 1980s, some local tea makers in Liu Bao still used the “many steamings, many dryings” technique as part of the Liu Bao refining process. An old “tea ticket” (an identifying label found inside each basket of tea) from Liu Bao tea's glory days (the late Qing to the early Republic, before the Sino-Japanese War), contains a reference to this “steam processing” as an authentic part of Liu Bao manufacturing.

In addition, the 1957 book *Tea Picking and Processing Methods* that we discussed earlier contains a direct reference to this method: “The tea factories steam it once more until it is soft and press it into baskets before transporting it to Guangzhou and Southeast Asia...because it is pressed into baskets before export, the name “Liu Bao tea” in the Guangzhou area refers to Liu Bao that is packed into baskets.” In the section entitled “The Characteristics of Liu Bao Tea,” the author mentions that “When the tea leaves are dry, they are a lustrous brownish-black in color; after being steamed and compressed into baskets, they are even blacker and glossier. When brewed, the liquor is a yellowish-red, and the leftover leaves turn a reddish-brown.” Until the 1950s, the refining process for Liu Bao tea most often consisted of this steaming and compressing technique. Later, as the volume of tea for export rapidly increased, merchants would buy the unfinished *maocha*, sort and sift it, refine it using this steam compressing technique, and then send it off to places such as Guangzhou and Hong Kong to be repackaged. There, it would be marked with a brand name or divided into smaller packages before being sold in Southeast Asia.

Tea Shops & Storage

“Hong Kong storehouses” are well-known for their role in the history of Liu Bao tea. In their earliest form, they arose when tea merchants from Macau and Hong Kong set up premises in Liu Bao’s Hekou Street to store their tea. For the most part, they bought dry tea leaves directly from the local tea farmers—in other words, the farmers processed the tea themselves from start to finish. With their sights on making a profit, the merchants were often quite picky about the local farmers’ tea. The merchants from Hong Kong and Guangdong established their own set of tea-buying criteria to drive prices down; when it came to weighing the tea, they would pick out any yellow leaves first, and even take out their sieves and sift out some of the broken leaves and tea dust.

Faced with the merchants’ demands, the tea farmers came up with their own method of “increasing” the

weight of the tea, which was called “using the *qi* from the ground” or *da di qi* (打地氣). (Here, *qi* may carry a double meaning—that of “vital energy,” which we may be familiar with, and also literally “steam”). The method involved carefully cleaning the floor and sprinkling it with water, then spreading out the heated tea leaves on the floor. The hot, dry tea leaves would absorb the water, which added a certain amount of weight. The farmers would then spread a layer of dry tea on top and take it to sell at the tea merchants’ shops. Apparently, this method could add two to three *jin* in weight per hundred *jin* of tea (one *jin* is roughly equal to 500/600 grams).

Unsurprisingly, this practice was soon exposed. Some of the smaller tea merchants noticed that when they went to do business in Guangzhou, one hundred *jin* of tea always seemed to be short by a couple of *jin* by the time they wanted to on-sell it to merchants from Hong Kong or Southeast Asia! Gradually, these small traveling merchants also began to use this *da di qi* method themselves before re-selling the tea. Of course, this repeated adding of moisture had an impact on the quality of the tea. After a while, the Hong Kong tea merchants noticed that Liu Bao tea that had been repeatedly moistened in this fashion produced a rosy liquor, quickly lost its bitterness and astringency, and was even more popular than before.

Following market demand, Hong Kong’s tea merchants slowly developed the practice of storing the tea in a humid environment—this was the earliest form of the so-called “Hong Kong storage” method. However, due to rapidly rising land prices in Hong Kong, the merchants had no hope of meeting market demand with the amount of tea they could process and store in their small basement workshops. So, the Hong Kong merchants spread this artificially sped-up post-fermentation method to Mainland China and began to establish large warehouses to emulate the “Hong Kong storage” method. In the 1940s and 1950s, Hong Kong merchants expressly used basement storage for Liu Bao tea, making use of the unique temperature and humidity conditions to artificially speed up post-fermentation. As the market continued to develop, the aged fragrance

and red liquor of puerh and Liu Bao tea gained wide acceptance among consumers. In Hong Kong’s tea houses during this period, puerh and Liu Bao together accounted for over 80% of tea consumption.

Tea Cakes

According to a record in the *Guangxi Agricultural Dispatch* from 1945, “After Liu Bao tea is harvested, Cantonese merchants set up shop at Hekou to purchase the tea. They then boil the leaves again to make them into tea cakes. The result is very fine, and when boiled and drunk, the flavor is similar to puerh tea. Around five hundred thousand *jin* of these are produced each year” (this is equivalent to 250 metric tons). The reference to “boiling” the leaves to make into tea cakes actually means steaming the leaves to soften them, then using a wooden mold to form them into disc-shaped cakes. The praise given here for these “very fine” tea cakes is in keeping with the recollections of the elderly Chajin who remember this period, and confirms that the art of making tea cakes had already reached a certain maturity. From the statement that “the flavor is similar to puerh tea,” we can infer that there was some confusion among people of the time regarding the original leaf and manufacturing techniques used for these two types of tea cake.

According to research, the merchants who established themselves at Hekou in Liu Bao during this period would sometimes use the leaf from the Liu Bao tea plant varietal to make puerh tea, to cater to a different niche in the market. In the late Qing Dynasty, at the same time that loose-leaf Liu Bao tea was available, there were also other types, such as tea discs, or *bing* (餅), tea bricks, Liu An tea in bamboo baskets, and Hua Juan (“Flower Roll”) tea, which was wrapped in tube-shaped bamboo packaging. (There’s a similar type of tea from Hunan called Anhua Qianliang, or “Thousand Tael” tea). These compressed shapes created a greater diversity of different tea products, and also reduced the space needed to transport the tea, thus lowering costs. All of these shapes required the tea to be steamed first to soften it for compression.

According to the recollections of Chen Yongchang (陳永昌) from the Xing Sheng Tea Shop, the shop used to hire several strapping fellows to trample the tea and to pull the bamboo strips, to tightly wrap the Flower Roll tea; then they would place the tube-shaped tea rolls in the corridors to air-dry. They had to steam the tea quite thoroughly before they could make those Flower Rolls. Chen Yongchang recalls that at the time, he didn't know there was also a similar method of tea packaging in Hunan. Mr. Li Xuqiu, the Chajin from Liu Bao in his nineties, also recalled how "the tea cakes we made at that time were round, like a compass." The exact implement he refers to is a *luogeng* (羅庚), a traditional Chinese compass. He also described the round tea cakes they used to make in careful detail: they were beautiful and finely made, similar in shape to today's tea cakes.

Modern-Day Liu Bao

As we saw earlier, the initial phase of processing generally includes kill-green, first rolling, piling, second rolling and drying. The refining process includes "filtering" (sifting the tea and picking out stems and debris), blending, first steaming, piling, second steaming, compressing into baskets and air-drying (for at least half a year). The particular piling method used in the refining phase is known as *ju dui* (焗堆), and is a key part of the Liu Bao manufacturing process. It was an early technique that improved over time; it had its origins in the early practice of compressing the tea into baskets, and evolved into a specific step in the refining process. Its goal is to induce fermentation under the influence of water and heat, causing some of the phenolic compounds in the tea to oxidize, and resulting in a brownish-yellow or red leaf and a bright red-orange liquor with a mellow and harmonious flavor. *Ju dui* techniques have varied over the years: In its earliest form, the method involved observing the tea leaves after blending them and deciding whether to add water, based on the existing moisture level, then tossing the leaves to mix evenly before putting them in the steamer. The steaming time varied from around 1 to 2.5

minutes, depending on the tea: young, tender, high-grade leaves would need less time, while older, coarser, low-grade leaves would need longer. The leaves were ready when they were uniformly soft and moist, and could be squeezed into a ball without falling apart when released. To carry out this *ju dui* step, the manufacturers used special "piling beds," a wooden platform with an area of around 50 square meters, surrounded by wooden sides made from China fir, about 60 centimeters high. Each bed could contain 5–8 tons of tea. The leaves were generally left in these piles for 6–10 hours. If the temperature was higher and the leaves on the younger side, the piles would be tossed every five hours to dissipate the heat and make sure the leaves fermented evenly. In later times, *ju dui* techniques progressed, and many places now have specialized steaming machines that use a boiler to steam the tea. The temperature must be checked often to make sure the tea remains unblemished by mold or rot. (For more details on how the conditions are regulated in this *ju dui* process, see the information under "First Steaming and Piling," in the section on "Refining" later in this article.)

According to records, the Wuzhou Tea Factory used this *ju dui* technique in their Liu Bao tea refining process in the early days. In the beginning, Liu Bao tea was only piled to a height of 1 m (with coarse tea) for the initial steaming and *ju dui* process. This turned out not to be thick enough, as it allowed the steam to dissipate, so the tea was often under-fermented, resulting in an insufficiently red liquor and a lingering bitter, astringent flavor. From 1956 onwards, the Wuzhou Tea Factory began to improve this method, heaping the coarser tea to a height of about 1.5 m. The tea makers would add the batches of steamed tea layer by layer to make a tall stack, compacting each layer as they went, while making sure the pile didn't become too solid in the middle. They would sprinkle water on the floor of the area to make sure the tea on the bottom layer was sufficiently moist. Once the pile was complete, they would surround it with boards of China firwood to form "walls." They would then lay a wet straw mat on top of the pile and weigh it down with wooden boards. After about 24 hours, the tea could proceed to the second steaming. This solved the problem of insufficient or uneven fermentation.



茶 Very early photograph of a winnowing machine used to separate the leaves. The stalks and little bits were separated by the spinning machine, saving the workers a lot of time, since sorting the leaves by hand on trays is very inefficient and time-consuming. Of course, the tumbling of the leaves would also damage some, however, resulting in a lower-quality tea.

Originally, the rolling step that came after kill-green in Liu Bao manufacturing was done by hand, and later, by trampling the tea leaves with the feet. But as production volumes increased, tea makers began using wooden machines to roll the tea. Liu Bao locals call these “tea grinders.” They looked and functioned a bit like a hand-operated mill. Later, water-powered versions were invented, which were even more efficient. However, the process and equipment for the following step, drying the leaves, didn’t advance much. Originally, the leaves were dried in small batches in a pan on a stovetop, so the tea maker could roll them as they heated. Many of Liu Bao’s elderly Chajin recalled that as production increased, the speed of the drying process couldn’t keep up with demand. The output of one drying pan after 3–5 hours was a mere couple of kilograms of tea; in one evening, one stove could produce a little over 5 kilograms of tea at most. It was impossible to keep up with the speed at which the tea was being rolled—one batch of tea took around 1–2 hours to dry. This meant that large amounts of rolled tea had to be left sitting in heaps, waiting to be dried.

From the mid-Qing Dynasty, especially from 1895 onwards, the demand for Liu Bao tea grew rapidly, and plantation areas were constantly expanding. During the tea-making season, the farmers would pick the tea during the daytime and carry out the kill-green and rolling steps at dusk. When evening rolled around, there wasn’t enough time left to complete the drying phase, so they had to make do with stopping when the tea leaves were around 70% dry and continuing to dry them the next morning. Later on, some of the larger and wealthier tea producers were outputting more than 100 kg of tea per day, and at that point, there wasn’t even enough time to dry all the leaves to 70% on the same day—they had to simply pile the rolled tea into a corner and wait until the next day to dry it in batches. The tea farmers and merchants very quickly noticed that leaves which had been piled like this for 10 or so hours produced a mellower, richer flavored tea, with much less astringency and bitterness, which became more popular with drinkers. From then on, this method of piling the tea overnight

before drying it became an established part of Liu Bao manufacturing. This early-stage piling process became known by locals as *yan dui* (罨堆). So, this ancient technique of piling the tea to ferment in its own juices can be verified by the recollections of Liu Bao’s older generations of Chajin.

The earliest record I was able to find was in the Guangxi Province Supply and Marketing Cooperative’s *Tea Picking and Processing Methods*, published in June of 1957. The book contains a clear reference to this piling method: “Liu Bao tea was originally produced in Liu Bao Village in Cangwu County. The manufacturing process is rather unique: It is not green tea, nor is it red tea, and it is unique to this province; therefore, it is named ‘Liu Bao tea’ after its place of origin. Its most notable characteristic is that after kill-green and rolling, it is heaped for several hours to implement post-fermentation before being dried...” In the same book, it is also stated that “The fermentation process is similar to that used for red tea, though red tea is fermented before pan-firing... Liu Bao tea is fired first then fermented, and the fermentation time is relatively long... so, it is called ‘post-fermented’ tea.” The records in this publication also clearly establish “piling to ferment” as a step in the manufacturing process: “The fermentation method is as follows: After the leaves are rolled and separated, they are spread out on a winnowing basket or bamboo mat to a thickness of around three to four inches, and are left to naturally ferment. After they are left overnight for around six or seven hours, the leaves change color from fresh green to a greenish-yellow...” So, we can see that at the time, “post-fermentation” was already an established technique and was being promoted via this official publication.

From this book, we can confirm that this “post-fermentation” technique was used in Liu Bao processing well before it began to be used for shou puerh in 1974. A textbook from the National Agricultural Secondary School entitled *The Study of Tea Making*, contains a description of piling as part of the initial Liu Bao processing phase (the textbook uses the term *wo dui*): “This process uses the effects of heat and moisture to break down the chlorophyll and accelerate chemical

changes within the leaves. This reduces bitterness and astringency, deepens the color of the tea liquor, makes the flavor richer and changes the color of leaves once brewed... During piling, the thickness of the tea piles depends on the air temperature, the humidity and the age of the leaves; generally, the piles are 30–50 cm thick. If wicker baskets are used, each basket can contain around 20 kg of damp tea. High temperatures or young, tender leaves call for a thinly spread layer, while old, coarse leaves should be packed tightly into thick piles. The tea leaves are turned over once or twice during piling, with the leaves nearest the outside being moved toward the center to promote even transformation. The total piling time varies from around 10–15 hours, depending on factors such as the age of the leaves, the air temperature and the weather. In general, low temperatures, rainy weather and old leaves require a longer time, while the opposite conditions require a shorter time.” From these records, we can observe two variations on the traditional method: piling the tea into baskets or simply piling it in the corner of a room. The method described here was the earliest precursor to the process of piling to achieve post-fermentation. So, we can also see that the three different names for this post-fermentation piling phase—*ju dui* (焗堆), *ou dui* (沤堆) and *wo dui* (渥堆)—do refer to slightly different techniques that have taken different paths in their evolution.

Even though in later times Chajin began to confuse the terms *ou dui* and *wo dui* and even used them interchangeably, there is a difference in terms of the exact technique. The *ju dui* method involves first steaming the *maocha* to add heat and moisture before carrying out the post-fermentation process. It evolved from the practice of steaming the tea and compressing into baskets, the so-called “many steamings, many dryings” technique that we discussed earlier. It is characterized by the fact that steaming adds both heat and moisture, but not a large volume of water. In the Liu Bao tea region, the term *ou dui* (沤堆) refers to what is locally called *yan dui* (罨堆). The word *yan* means “covered,” or “sealed,” so it indicates that the piles of tea are covered up and left

to ferment in an enclosed space. Another term with the same meaning is *dui men* (堆悶), with *men* also meaning “sealed” or “covered” and *dui* simply meaning “pile.” In Cantonese, the character “沤” (Mandarin pronunciation: *ou*) carries the meaning “to steep for a long time” and also “to pile up.” So, the local meaning of *ou dui* is to cover the tea leaves with a bamboo mat after rolling and let them ferment in their own juices, without adding water. The term was originally used to refer to the fermentation that occurs in the initial processing phase, as opposed to the refining phase. (This method is also quite different to the *men huang* and *men dui* processes used for yellow tea, in terms of the time, temperature, water content and speed of the chemical and physical changes.) The character 渥 (*wò*) means “to moisten,” so it implies the involvement of water. Thus, the term *wo dui* (渥堆) was originally exclusively applied to the more recent-

ly developed method of adding water to aid fermentation, which is a step in the second phase of Liu Bao processing: the refining phase.

This method requires sprinkling a sufficient amount of water onto the tea piles to promote fermentation. So, as we can see, the *wo dui* and *ou dui* methods are quite different in terms of the height of the tea piles, the piling time and the techniques used. But since the details of these two methods are not widely known, the terms *wo dui* and *ou dui* have become confused, and today are used interchangeably to refer to the piling process, even in specialized tea publications. In addition, many publications use the same term (be it *wo dui* or *ou dui*) to refer to the piling step that happens in the initial processing phase of Liu Bao as well as the piling step in the refining phase. These two piling steps are different and should not be confused. The piling step in the initial processing

phase is more correctly referred to as *dui men*. This *dui men* step (formerly called *ou dui*) is unique to the initial processing phase of Liu Bao—puerh tea processing does not have an equivalent step. Professional publications have also lacked discussions of the differences between the *dui men* step of initial Liu Bao processing and the *wo dui* step in the refining process, in terms of technique, temperature, humidity, time and chemical/physical changes. So, over time, the distinction between these two has also largely become blurred.

As we’ve seen, the modern Liu Bao manufacturing process can be split into two main phases: initial processing, or *chu zhi* (初制), and refining, or *jing zhi* (精製). In the following pages, we will explore both of these stages in much greater depth, hopefully leaving you with a feeling that you understand and appreciate the richness of Liu Bao production.



茶 Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) painting showing tea production before leaving on a boat. You can see workers compressing tea into boxes. Others are weighing tea, while the owners conduct the accounting and measurement of tea. There is also a Western merchant in the bottom left buying Liu Bao tea. (We wonder if any of that tea is laying around in Europe or the U.K.)

INITIAL PROCESSING

The initial process of making the *maocha*, or semi-finished tea, includes the following five steps:

1. Kill-green (*sha qing*, 殺青)

This step halts oxidation in the leaves. Around 3–4 kg of tea leaves are placed into a large wok at a temperature of between 90–120 °C. Older leaves are packed more tightly, while young, tender leaves are spread more loosely. The leaves are ready when they become fragrant and soft, change from bright green to dark green, lose their shine and begin sticking together. At this point, they are taken out for rolling. The kill-green process takes about 5–6 minutes in total.

2. Initial rolling (*chu rou*, 初揉)

The goal of rolling is to shape the tea leaves and also to damage the leaf cells. The aim is to achieve about 60–65% damage to the cellular tissue in the leaves. It's important to avoid rolling the leaves heavily for too long. The best approach is to first knead them lightly for about 5 minutes; then, when the leaves begin to roll up into thin strips, they can be rolled with more pressure for another 15 minutes, then lightly again for another 5 minutes. Then, after sifting, the leaves should be rolled for another 10–15 minutes. The whole rolling process takes 40 minutes for first- and second-grade tea, and 45–50 minutes for third-grade and below.

3. Piling (*dui men*, 堆悶)

This is a key step in the processing of Liu Bao. There are two possible techniques for this: the bamboo basket method and the bamboo mat method. The first method involves filling a bamboo basket with 20–25 kg of tea. The second involves piling the rolled leaves to a depth of 30–50 cm on top of a bamboo mat, then covering the pile with a wet cloth or sackcloth and leaving it for 10–15 minutes. During this time, the leaves must be tossed 2–3 times to mix them evenly. The most important part of the *dui men* process is to maintain the temperature of the tea piles at around 50 °C. If the temperature reaches 55–60 °C, the piles must be repeatedly stirred up to ensure

an even temperature and prevent the leaves from turning black. This continues until the leaves have turned from dark green to a brassy color, and until their pungent, vegetal scent transforms into a sweet, mellow fragrance. The overall time usually ranges from 20–30 hours, depending on the age of the leaves, the air temperature and the thickness of the piles. One common traditional method is to lay a cloth over the tea piles and leave them overnight until early the next morning.

4. Second rolling (*fu rou*, 複揉)

High-grade teas generally don't need to be rolled again and can be dried directly after piling, but these days, most methods include a second rolling. This has the benefit of re-curling any leaves that have unfurled during the piling phase, and of ensuring a uniform moisture content, which helps the leaves dry efficiently afterwards. Before the second rolling, it's advisable to bake the leaves at a low temperature of 50–60 °C for 7–10 minutes, then lightly roll them for 5–6 minutes, until all the leaves are once more tightly curled into thin strips.

5. Drying (*gan zao*, 乾燥)

The tea is dried over a wood-fired stove. The drying phase is usually divided into two parts: initial drying and thorough drying. For the first step, the leaves are spread around 3 cm thick and dried at a heat of 70–90 °C, stirring every 5 minutes or so. Once the leaves are 60–70% dry, they are spread out and set aside for an hour to allow the water content to evenly redistribute. They are then ready for the “thorough drying” step, where they are spread out to a thickness of 5–6 cm and slow-baked for a long time at 50–60 °C. When drying Liu Bao, sun-drying cannot be substituted for drying the tea over a fire. It was traditional to use pinewood, though personally, I think it's preferable to use a wood that, unlike pine, doesn't produce a strong-smelling smoke and influence the flavor of the tea. When stirring the tea, it's important to do so lightly, to avoid burning the leaves. The tea should be dried until the leaves

can be crumbled into powder with the fingers and the tea stems snap easily when bent. This will make the best and brightest tea liquor with a full body and rich flavor and aroma.

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Withering (sai qing, 曬青)



Kill-green (sha qing, 殺青), done with forked sticks



Checking the kill-green



First rolling/shaping (rou nian, 揉捻), then separating the clumps



First drying/baking (hong pei, 烘培)



Second rolling/shaping



Second drying/baking



Piling overnight (wo dui, 渥堆)



Slowly roast dry (hong gan, 烘乾) or baked dry in a bamboo basket



REFINING

Next comes the refining process: after the leaves are graded and any yellow leaves, stalks, and so forth are picked out, the tea is filtered and graded, blended, steamed once for piling, steamed again for compressing into baskets, and finally air-dried and packaged for sale. Liu Bao tea is sorted into five grades, depending on the age and thickness of the leaves (in the past there were also three other grades). Sometimes the tea will be sifted and blended, depending on the quantity and the quality of the leaf. Occasionally, the manufacturers will even blend tea from different batches of *maocha* together to improve the flavor. The initial steaming and piling step is crucial, using heat to change the chemical composition of the tea, to change the color of the leaf to reddish-brown and the tea liquor to a deep red with a rich, mellow flavor.

1. First steaming and piling

High-grade tea requires less steaming time, while coarse, lower-grade tea needs a bit longer. The leaves are steamed until they're soft and moist, and remain stuck together when balled up in a fist. They are usually steamed using a boiler for 1–1.5 minutes. After steaming, the tea is laid out to cool down to around 80 °C, when it is ready for the *dui men* piling step. The depth of the piles depends on the age and coarseness of the leaves: first- to third-grade tea is piled to between 60–80 cm, while grades four and five are piled to a height of 1–1.5 m. First- and second-grade tea need to be compressed from all sides of the pile, with a bamboo mat or similar cover laid on top, while third- to fifth-grade tea piles must be compacted around the edges while left loose in the center. Once the piling commences, the windows and doors of the fermentation room must be sealed tightly. The tea piles must be turned over once during piling, generally after 7–8 days, once the temperature of the tea piles has reached 50–60 °C. Once the tea is suitably fermented, the leaves will be soft and yellowish-brown or reddish-brown in color, and will give off a rich, fragrant aroma. The entire process usually takes

15–20 days. Throughout the process, the temperature of the piles should remain at around 50 °C, and the humidity should be around 85–90%. The water content of the leaves should remain around 18–20%.

2. Second steaming and compressing

This process has its roots in the traditional method of steaming the tea to compress it into baskets. However, the equipment used for this step has evolved a lot: these days, the steaming is usually done with a boiler or a specialized steaming machine, hence the two-part steaming process. Because of this, the whole refining process is sometimes referred to as the “double-steaming” process. The steaming machines usually consist of a round metal plate with a three-layered frame inside to hold the tea leaves, and steam holes in the bottom. Each layer is filled with about 20 kg of tea leaves, which are then steamed at 100 °C until the leaves are thoroughly damp and hold together for a while when squeezed into a ball. Around 4–5 minutes is usually long enough for first- and second-grade tea, while third- to fifth-grade tea may take 6–7 minutes. Steaming the leaves for too long should be avoided—if the water content gets too high it can affect the quality of the tea.

Once the tea is fully steamed, the round steaming plate can be turned to unload the three layers of tea into large bamboo baskets, compressing each layer tightly after it's added. Each basket contains around 60 kg of tea. Ideally, the tea will be tightly packed around the outside and a bit looser in the middle. After this second steaming, the baskets of tea are placed in a cool, dark, well-ventilated storage area so that the tea can cool down and the remaining moisture can evaporate. After 6 or 7 days, once the tea has cooled to room temperature, the baskets are sealed up and transferred to a storage warehouse. The warehouse needs to be cool and dark, with a humidity of around 85%. The baskets of tea are stacked neatly on wooden racks, and the storehouse is sealed up. After two months, the windows are opened to

aerate the storeroom, dispelling any odor and allowing the water content of the tea to further decrease. After another six months of storage, the tea matures into finished Liu Bao, with a red-colored liquor.

The Liu Bao refining process in the early days of the Wuzhou Tea Factory was as follows:

Filtering and picking out debris → *Blending* → *First steaming* → *Piling (ju dui)* → *Dismantling the piles* → *Laying the tea out to dry* → *Second steaming* → *Compressing into baskets* → *Aging in storage*

At that time, Liu Bao tea was classified into grades from one to five, plus “un-graded” tea. The *ju dui* piling method was standard for carrying out post-fermentation. According to records, in 1954, the Wuzhou Tea Factory made some improvements to their methods of filtering the tea and removing detritus, while also improving their tea-steaming cauldrons and acquiring some more, and increasing the thickness of the piles as well as their *ju dui* technique.

提煉茶

每一籃有數百年的傳統



提煉

茶 An old tea worker closing a basket of compressed Liu Bao that was made in the traditional way. The teas was just moments ago compressed. These baskets are smaller than the fifty- or sixty-kilogram baskets of yesteryear. This one weighs approximately thirty kilograms. The baskets would have traditionally gone into storage at this point, usually in a cool, dark tunnel for around a week and then on to a warehouse where the humidity was high enough to start the fermentation process.





茶 The piling of Liu Bao requires experience to artificially ferment Liu Bao, accounting for temperature, humidity, pile depth and water. Right is a close-up of the molds that grow on Liu Bao tea.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Liu Bao tea saw a boom in popularity in Southeast Asian export market, and the market in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia became flooded with Liu Bao tea made from tea leaves from Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia. This posed a serious threat to the production and export of authentic Liu Bao tea from Guangxi. According to the recollections of elderly Chajin Guo Weichen (郭維琛), the export market for genuine Liu Bao did suffer from the influence of this “Liu Bao” tea made from other types of tea leaf.

1946 saw the founding of the Hong Kong Tak Son Hong Company (which belonged to the Hong Kong China Resources Company). From 1949 onwards, this company became the head representative of all companies importing and exporting local products from Mainland China to Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. They traded in tea and other goods, and became quite well-known in Hong Kong tea circles. The Hong Kong Tak Son Hong Company was intimately involved in the development of the technique of piling to ferment the tea in Guangxi and Guangdong, before it first appeared in

Yunnan. According to the recollections of the older generations of Chajin, from the early 1940s through to the 1950s, market demand saw more and more Hong Kong merchants producing this imitation Liu Bao, which led to the development of a quite robust piling technique. There were quite a few companies making this tea, known on the streets as “red flood tea,” including Sang Kee, Baotai, Lian Xing Long and Changzhou Fuhua. Early on, merchants from Hong Kong and the southern provinces realized that storing teas such as Liu Bao and puerh in an environment with high humidity and a constant temperature could speed up the aging process. In Liu Bao’s tea villages, too, purveyors of tea noticed early on that high humidity could promote faster aging.

From 1946, the rapid rise of Hong Kong’s land value led some merchants to store tea in cellars or storehouses built into hillsides, and they noticed that the tea matured quickly in these conditions. This process was still fairly time-consuming, taking one to two years, and required access to a cave dug into a hillside—so, of course, this method was not available to all tea

merchants. So, some merchants tried to imitate these hillside storage conditions by spraying tea with water and packing it into hemp sacks for storage. They soon realized this was also quite effective, and through experimentation, they developed a process that included steps such as regularly checking the sacks of tea, turning them, ventilating the area and dissipating the heat. Through keeping careful track of the changes in the leaf, they determined the optimal storage time. After about a year, or even six months, the tea would develop its characteristic red liquor, rich flavor and “aged” fragrance. Thus, they arrived at a method that was both simpler and faster. Even better was that after they got used to the taste, consumers began to favor this “aged tea.”

This type of artificially aged Liu Bao and puerh were quite popular among consumers, and aged tea began to gain a following. Thanks to this, large quantities of this “aged tea” were sold locally in Hong Kong and exported to various Southeast Asian countries under the name of “Liu Bao” tea. Because of its low-cost source leaf and short processing time, this “red flood tea” had a significant impact on the export market for Liu Bao tea from Guangxi and Guangdong. Although at the time, there wasn’t a lot of close contact between Hong Kong and the Mainland, there was certainly still a flow of information between these southern Cantonese-speaking regions, particularly between local Guangxi and Guangdong enterprises and re-export companies such as Hong Kong’s Tak Son Hong. In response to the threat from this “red flood tea,” Tak Son Hong reported the situation back to the tea growers in Guangdong and Wuzhou, and brought back samples of the tea for local producers to study.

The Guangdong Tea Import and Export Company sent a team specifically to gather information about the Hong Kong merchants’ techniques of using green tea *maocha* and artificially aging and fermenting it. They collated, compared and analyzed all the different techniques used for making “red flood tea,” and developed a set of procedures for the *wo dui* piling technique. They then conducted a series of post-fermentation experiments at the Da Chong Kou Tea Factory in Fang Village, which was affiliat-

ed with the Guangdong Tea Import and Export Company. According to records from Guangdong, after two years of experimentation, they finally achieved success in the spring and summer of 1957. At around the same time as this process in Guangdong was beginning, the Wuzhou Tea Factory also began researching post-fermentation techniques, using the information and samples provided by Tak Son Hong. According to Wuzhou Tea Factory's senior technician Qin Jiquan (覃紀全), in 1958, the Fuzhou Tea Factory succeeded in developing the modern Liu Bao *wo dui* piling technique, and began to commercially produce some of their tea using this method.

However, it wasn't until 1965 that all the tea was produced using the modern method. That year is considered to mark the official appearance of modern Liu Bao tea. Existing records indicate that in 1873, a small group of experts from Yunnan's tea factories was sent to the Guangdong Tea Import and Export Company to study puerh tea production techniques. The group included Zou Bingliang (鄒炳良) from the Hai Tea Factory, Wu Qiying (吳啓英) from the Kunming Tea Factory and Cao Zhenxing (曹振興) from the Xiaguan Tea Factory. As a result, Yunnan tea producers also started using the *wo dui* post-fermentation technique for puerh tea, and began large-scale production using this method. In terms of the raw leaf, from 1954, privately owned tea businesses were forbidden from purchasing *maocha* (the "raw," or really semi-processed, leaf), so most of the Liu Bao leaves grown in Guangxi were bought by the state-operated Supply and Marketing Department, with uniform prices and tea grade standards set by the state. The tea from the region was then all sent to the Wuzhou Tea Factory for refining and eventually export.

Around the same time, the state-run Heng County Tea Factory was established. 1966 saw the establishment of another state-run factory, the Guilin Tea Factory. The semi-processed *maocha* from the surrounding regions was also sent to these factories for refining and preparation for export. At this time, significant changes began to emerge in the Liu Bao *maocha*. The Guilin Tea Factory mostly used tea leaf

varieties, such as Linggui large-leaf, Longsheng Longji, Xing'an Liudong and Lipu Xiuren. The Wuzhou Tea Factory, on the other hand, mostly used leaves from the local population of Liu Bao varietal tea plants. Gradually, other leaf varieties, such as Shanglin Antang, also came to be used for producing Liu Bao tea. Later on, there appeared another variety familiar to many Chajin, the Gui Qing tea varietal, which was also used to make Liu Bao. At the time, local tea factories in Liu Bao were using cold fermentation techniques. Then, in January of 1953, the Guangzhou branch of the China National Tea Corporation set up an office in Wuzhou. This spurred technical progress in the local tea factories, and they began using the modern *wo dui* post-fermentation technique to make Liu Bao. The Liu Bao that was exported gradually came to be produced using this method.

In 1976 in Cangwu County, the Liu Bao Village Chujing United Tea Processing Plant was founded. From its founding until May of 1979, this factory still used traditional Liu Bao refining techniques, such as the "double-steamed," "multi-steamed" and *ju dui* (piling) methods. According to a record from materials produced by the Cangwu County Local Product Corporation's Tea Group, from May 1979 to October of 1982, Cangwu's Liu Bao tea producers began using the modern *wo dui* cold fermentation technique in their refining process. The materials state that "The current production cycle of Liu Bao tea is lengthy and unable to satisfy market demand; the cost is also relatively high. Because of this, Liu Bao tea production methods are being reformed." From then on, almost all large-scale producers of Liu Bao used the modern method, with the *wo dui* "cold fermentation" piling technique replacing the earlier *ju dui* (sealed piling) technique in the refining process. The Liu Bao refining process includes the following steps:

Sifting and filtering* → *Blending* → *Piling (wo dui)* → *Steaming* → *Compressing and shaping* → *Air-drying and aging

The *wo dui* piling technique is a crucial part of the Liu Bao manufac-

turing process, and retains an air of mystery—the exact details are kept a closely guarded secret by those in the industry. The workshops where piling takes place are considered a restricted area, with controlled entry and no visitor access. Nevertheless, during my interviews with many of the older generations of tea masters and Chajin, they shared some knowledge about the *wo dui* process, and in some cases the culmination of decades of personal experience. So, now I may share some of this knowledge with you, the reader. The *wo dui* process involves artificially accelerated post-fermentation, according to the following steps:

Sifting* → *Picking out stalks and debris* → *Blending* → *Piling up the leaves* → *Adding water and fermenting* → *Turning over the piles* → *Fermenting again* → *Turning over again (the steps of turning over the leaves, breaking up clumps and adding water are repeated multiple times)

It's critical to regulate the depth, water content and internal temperature of the tea piles. The water content in the leaves needs to be between 25–30%, and the piles are between 50 cm and 1 m deep, depending on the grade of the leaf. The temperature should be kept between 45–60 °C. If the temperature creeps toward the higher end of the range, the tea piles must be promptly turned over to ensure the tea ferments evenly at the bottom and on the surface of the heaps. Any clumps must be loosened up—this is usually done with a special machine.

Experienced tea masters can distinguish the moisture content and degree of fermentation just by picking up the leaves, holding and rolling and smelling them. They can feel the temperature and moisture content with their hands, without needing any implements, and know what steps to take, depending on the changes in temperature. One of the old Chajin I spoke to emphasized the importance of water content during piling. The key to adding water is to understand how to observe the tea and adapt your method accordingly. High-grade tea, for example, needs less water, and lower grade tea with coarse and sometimes also tightly-rolled leaves requires much more water to aid in fermentation.



It's also crucial to sprinkle the water evenly across the tea piles; you mustn't just pour it on and risk flooding the bottom of the heap. When the water content is just right, the tea leaves do not make a rustling sound when you pick up a handful; once you loosen your grip, the leaves do not ball up, but separate slowly and naturally fall to the ground one by one, without sticking to the hand. The palm of your hand may remain a little damp once the leaves fall, but it shouldn't be noticeably wet, and certainly not dripping. Judging the temperature of the tea piles is also important, to avoid "cooking" them with overly high temperatures. However, these days, most people string up a couple of rows of thermometers above the tea piles, so they can easily be stuck in to monitor the temperature, particularly in the heart of the piles.

Regarding Yunnan puerh, we can find some useful information in an article called *Puerh Tea: Yunnan Shou Tea* penned by the president of the Yunnan Tea Association, Zou Jiaju (邹家驹). The article begins by stating that "As everyone knows, Yunnan began producing shou tea in 1973." The author continues: "I have consulted literary and historical sources from the regions

associated with producing compressed tea cakes, namely Dali, Ban'na and Simao, and there is no record of shou tea being produced prior to 1973... Before 1948, compressed tea was the only type to be exported to Hong Kong from Yunnan. From the early 1950s onwards, however, most of the Yunnan tea arriving in Hong Kong was loose-leaf tea." I was able to confirm with Hong Kong's tea merchants and industry insiders that in the 1950s, owing to Liu Bao tea's surging popularity, a certain amount of loose-leaf Yunnan puerh was exported to Malaysia labeled as "loose-leaf Liu Bao" tea. For a few years on either side of 1949, there was a trend for this type of loose-leaf, basket-packaged Liu Bao in the Cantonese regions of southern China, Hong Kong, Macau and Southeast Asia.

In the '50s, loose-leaf Yunnan puerh was also big in the market. During this time, Hong Kong merchants noticed consumers' warm reception of the mellow, fragrant Liu Bao that had been aged by piling, and began to store Liu Bao and puerh in basement storehouses, making use of the unique temperature and humidity to promote artificial post-fermentation.

As the market continued to evolve into the late 1950s, Hong Kong teahouses mainly served this "red flood tea," and tea drinkers came to prefer this "ripened" tea with its aged fragrance, red liquor and brown leaves. In his book, Mr. Zou Jiaju also recounts that "In the '50s, there was almost no communication between Hong Kong and the Mainland, but news of Hong Kong's artificially post-fermented tea still got through. On November 2nd, 1955, the (Yunnan) provincial corporation instructed the Xiaguan Tea Factory to start experimenting with post-fermentation on their compressed tea for export. Due to a lack of information, the experiments were inconclusive."

In 1974, after many years of further study and experimentation, they finally succeeded in producing "ripened" shou puerh tea using post-fermentation. In reality, of course, Liu Bao tea had been produced using post-fermentation techniques since before the Sino-Japanese War up until 1953, using the traditional "double-steaming," "multi-steaming" and *ju dui* sealed piling methods. In 1958, as we've discussed, the Wuzhou Tea Factory invented the modern *wo dui* technique for post-fermenting Liu Bao, and in

茶 Upper Left: The Wuzhou Tea Factory storage tunnel; they leave tea in these tunnels to ferment for at least 180 days, though traditionally the tea would have sat for years in such spaces, oxidizing and fermenting.

Bottom Left & Left: Storing big baskets and bags of Liu Bao in tunnels: Many of these tunnels were created to be air-raid shelters during WWII. They offer the perfect amount of humidity and constant airflow that the tea prefers.

Right: Wuzhou Tea Factory also has this warehouse, which was built in 1953. The whole building is made out of wood, which the foremen says influences the flavor and aroma of the tea, and also increases the humidity in the rooms. They still use it today. The tea comes here after being fermented in the tunnels. Different rooms have different amounts of humidity, and the tea is moved around, depending on what stage in its aging it is in.



1965, this method began to be replicated *en masse*. According to one of the elderly workers from the Wuzhou Tea Factory, in the early 1970s, some fellow tea professionals came to the factory from Yunnan to study the use of post-fermentation techniques for making shou puerh tea. It's not clear whether they ended up applying the *wo dui* piling technique borrowed from Liu Bao tea in their own tea production.

Storing the tea to dry and age it is the final key step in the Liu Bao production process. The storage method is very important: After the final steaming and being packed into baskets, the tea must be placed in a clean, cool, dark, well-ventilated and odor-free environment. Once the tea has cooled to room temperature and the water content of the leaves have dropped below 18%, the tea is transferred to a new storage area to age. The conditions must be clean, with a humidity of 75–90% and a temperature between 23–28 °C, and again, an absence of odors. Later, it is moved again to a clean, cool, dark, dry, odor-free wooden storehouse to finish maturing. The entire aging process wouldn't normally last more than 180 days. An alterna-

tive method is to use warehouse-style storage to complete the aging process: The baskets of tea are stacked in rows in a cool, dark warehouse, resting on wooden boards—the baskets of tea must not be placed directly on the ground. The warehouse should then be sealed up, and be maintained at a humidity of 75–90%. After about 60 days, once the liquor has attained the desired color, the windows and doors are opened up to ventilate the warehouse and gradually decrease the moisture content in the tea.

The drying and aging process has some very specific requirements as to the method and environmental conditions. There's an interesting story related to this: during the planned economy era prior to the 1980s, the Huang County Tea Factory and the Guilin Tea Factory tried their hand at producing Liu Bao Tea, but because the weather conditions in their respective regions were so different from the conditions in Wuzhou, the quality and flavor of the tea they produced was not nearly as good. As a result, many of the teas produced by the Guilin Tea Factory were actually sent to Wuzhou for “re-aging” before being exported along with Wuzhou's own tea!

In 2002, the Guangxi Inspection and Quarantine Bureau released an industry standard for Liu Bao tea (titled *Liu Bao Tea GXCIQ88-2003*). The standard was developed in cooperation with the Wuzhou Tea Factory and the Wuzhou Tea Import and Export Corporation, which were the only two enterprises producing Liu Bao at that time, and was based on the practices used at these factories. The standard was put into practice on October 8th, 2003, and marked the beginning of an era of standardized Liu Bao production with uniform technical specifications. Then, on May 27th, 2009, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous region also released a regional standard (*DB45/T581-2009 Liu Bao Tea*), which was implemented on July 30th of the same year. This standard contained unified specifications for aspects of Liu Bao tea production, including definitions and terminology, classification and grading, testing methods, inspection regulations, branding, packaging, transportation and storage.



TeaWayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you, in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month, we would like to introduce Yuliya Maslyn.

I am a tea *lover*, not a tea nerd, and there is no definite beginning to my tea journey. Since my teenage years, I have been drinking loose-leaf tea, creating my own rituals, reinforced by random snippets of information and my personal interpretation of them. Tea time was my daily portion of miracle; it brightened up my life and elevated me from the mundane by taking me to foreign, poetic places. I hadn't yet found tea friends or come across a tea community, and my tea ceremonies were odd enough to keep casual tea drinkers away. As I grew and evolved, so did my tea practice, though it had no direction or focus, like many other aspects of my life.

A big milestone in my tea journey was, of course, discovering this Global Tea Hut community in 2014. I first heard Wu De talk in an interview about living tea—a narrative which resonated with my beliefs about life in general, but through the prism of tea, it gained a broader meaning. I subscribed to the magazine straight away. Over the following year, I just tuned in and absorbed the knowledge spread across the pages, intertwined with beautiful images. The more I read, the more obvious my lack of experiential knowledge became, especially transmitted through a direct encounter with authentic tradition. After one year of reading the magazine, I got in touch with some Global Tea Hut members in Tallinn and booked my tickets to attend Wu De's workshops there.

It was a mesmerizing experience to be served tea by Wu De, and to have a chance to finally embody all those words I'd read in the magazine. It's like falling into a vortex and getting pulled deeper in: Dark, warm, aromatic liquor envelops you, stops time and disorients you from the exact location, but gives you a pulsating sensation that signals you are at the right place and right time, and that it all couldn't be any other way. It's like free diving: Once you're under the surface, everything stops, and at the same time, everything happens to you. I was overwhelmed with gratitude for such a profound moment. This feeling of gratitude and reverence for Tea has grown day by day ever since.

The second year passed by, bringing me closer to the Global Tea Hut community. After spending another weekend with Wu De in Czech and learning more about the tradition, I started serving bowl tea to my friends. Very gently and humbly She started talking to me, and our dialog began. "We learn to teach, we teach to understand," became my mantra from that year with Tea, Yoga and Singing Bowls. Every time I serve tea, I witness magic happening: my guests' faces light up and their spirits elevate, creating nice vibrations in the tea space. The Leaf is the best teacher of presence, observance and patience. I need to be alert, relaxed, calm and creative to unpack the healing potential hidden in tea, and cultivating these qualities



茶人: Yuliya Maslyn

has a transformative and long-lasting effect. At first, I started to pay attention to each session, but very quickly this has come to stretch into the time between sessions, and gradually started affecting my personality. I can see how my interaction with others became smoother and I am more content within myself, honoring that sacred space created by the Leaf. Tea also helps me steer through the modern world with all the possibilities it gives us, where it is very easy to get distracted by the abundance of choices. When I get drawn into the midst of wants, shoulds and needs, Tea draws my attention back to the center and helps ground me—to slow down, reflect and remember what is important in life: connection to Self, Nature and Other people.

To interact with Tea is profound, humbling, gratifying and always elevating me to a better version of myself. Before joining Global Tea Hut, I was just *drinking* tea, but now I have a *practice*, which follows a tradition and brings joy to my life. The purity and simplicity of the Hut tradition gives me a resting space, where I can get into the flow and let the Leaf change this world into a better place bowl by bowl.

Speaking of that change, it would be an honor to share a bowl of tea with you. Please get in touch if you are planning to come to Stockholm, or visit www.yuliya.life/tea to find more about our local Swedish tea gatherings!

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Tea & Zen Retreats

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茶主题: Meng Song



If you serve tea regularly and would like some extra magazines or tea tins to give out to help spread the word about Global Tea Hut, please let us know. We are also looking to donate magazines to public places.



We are considering hosting two Annual Global Tea Hut Trips in 2018: our usual spring trip to a tea-growing region of Asia and a second trip within Taiwan itself. Would this second trip interest you?



Please continue to use the app. Don't feel intimidated to post about your daily tea, any questions you have about tea or teaware, or your reflections on the magazine or the Tea of the Month!



We have been looking at land for Light Meets Life. Help us make our new Center a reality by reading the "10kx2020" pamphlet and contacting us if you feel there is any way you can help!



The live broadcasts are so much fun! We are doing two every month: one in the beginning, which is a great Q & A, and another broadcast at the end of the month, where we discuss the Tea of the Month.



Wu De will be in Hong Kong mid-January hosting some tea events. They should be posted on the website very soon (under the "connect" tab). This will be our first time hosting there, which is exciting!



Our Light Meets Life fundraiser teas and teaware have arrived. We have some of the best cakes we have ever produced and some glorious gongfu teaware. All the proceeds will help build our future Center, called "Light Meets Life."

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. Make sure you apply early for courses as they fill up fast (this is why we need a bigger, more awesome Center).



We are hiring! We have three jobs to fill: a PR position, a web designer and we are offering a one-year internship for a photographer/vid-eographer. All three positions are paid. Check out the "10kx2020" pamphlet for details.



We are considering offering one longer, more meditative course for older/experienced students in 2018. This course would be twenty days, cover each brewing method more in-depth and also include more meditation each day. Would you be interested? If so, what time of year would be best for you?



If courses are full, please join the waiting list and be ready to travel. Spaces do often open up last minute!

December Affirmation

I am full of joy and cheer

We often assume that joy is something that occurs when we get what we want, but joy is something to cultivate. And what better time than the holidays? Am I as cheerful and joyous as I wish to be? What can I do to be more joyful today?

六堡茶

每一籃裡的寶藏

www.globalteahut.org

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

GLOBAL TEA HUT
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