

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

May 2022

工夫實驗
超越平凡的恩典

GONGFU
EXPERIMENTS II

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Issue 124 / May 2022

GLOBAL TEA HUT

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE



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After exactly three years, we are returning to gong-fu experiments, exploring the rich and vast world of gongfu tea through the lens of a reliance on our own experiential wisdom and sensitivity through experimentation. We also have one of the best teas we have ever shared!

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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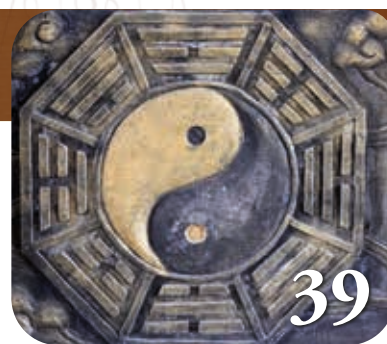
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recycled & recyclable



Soy ink

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From the editor

In May, the weather starts to warm up in Taiwan. With the beginning of summer, we move into the fire element of the year. Unlike the wood of spring, which we feel usually needs nourishment, the fire usually needs disciplining, especially in Taiwan, where it can be very hot. Interestingly, this means that many of the spring teas we drink to nourish wood (being water teas) stay in rotation, only they are now controlling the early fire element. This includes the fresh green teas and lightly-oxidized oolong teas that are just now coming to market. Young sheng is great for this, but we usually don't get samples of this year's maocha until June. However, we find the sheng from the previous year still contains enough water energy to be wonderful at this time of year. In fact, the slight woody quality caused by a year or three of aging can make a slightly aged sheng a nice balance for the early summer—it disciplines fire, but not too much since the wood energy encourages the fire. Don't get stuck in formulas, though. For example, this late spring we had a few rainy cold fronts pass through Taiwan, and the weather was not typical of our late spring/early summer climate. The cold dampness had us turning to earthy teas like shou and semi-aged sheng to warm us up and discipline the water. Liu Bao's miraculous ability to expel dampness is always great in Taiwan since it helps with the humidity and can actually be both warming and cooling when needed.

I hope you appreciate the way I share my attempts to align my tea and life with the seasons each month. If you are in a very different part of the world, you can perhaps reverse my advice or at least use the template to start harmonizing your tea to the seasons where you live. I have learned to expand this to my sleep schedule, diet, exercise and energy uses, and many more areas of life, which I feel helps to harmonize my existence with Nature in ways that modern life has lost. Losing connection with the processes of growing our own food has left many of us feeling as if the changing seasons, weather patterns and so on are not a part of our lives. I have caught myself grumbling about the rain as if it is a problem getting in the way of my plans for that day. At such times I remember that this very rain is a source of my life, causing my food to grow and making Taiwan green, which I love. My ancestors prayed for rain, especially since their survival often depended on it. The more I make my daily life turn in harmony with the weather and seasons, the more connected I feel. I also see the return of chaxi, teaware and tea each year as a blessing to celebrate my few trips around the sun before I return to the dust.

Some commercial tea brands sell the idea of consistency, but most true-green (tea version of "true-blue") tea lovers like us prefer to taste the changes in terroir from place to place and to experience the unique flavors, aromas and energy of each season or year. The only true masters, the farmers, know that great tea is made by Heaven, Earth and

human working together. Once every seven to ten years, they get a perfect collaboration of weather, soil, ecology and temperature that results in the best of the best. And they know it because they taste the differences in the tea from season to season, year after year.

This month, we are hard at work finishing up the first of three gongfu tea courses. (You can read more about this course on p. 37.) In honor of that, we thought we would return once again to the subject of gongfu tea. In our tradition, we focus on experiential understanding through study and context coupled with practice and experimentation. We believe that with an agreed standard, we can verify better wares and methods through experimentation.

There are three things one needs to advance in gongfu tea, the path of mastery through self-discipline: The first is a teacher who can offer context, history and guidance, the second is a standard to use to judge quality (and sensitivity of subtler and subtler aspects of that standard) and the third is a set of traditional experiments to start to experience why certain methods or teaware are chosen above others. We start with some traditional experiments and then we can later adapt those experiments, creating several out of each one. Finally, we can go on to invent our own experiments, expanding our spirit of exploration through experimentation. In May 2019, we offered the first and most important set of experiments. In this issue, we continue from there, offering the second set of experiments that are not as important as the first batch, but are close behind. As we did then, we do not provide any conclusions that could influence your judgment. We just tell you the materials needed and the procedure to follow, leaving the experience and conclusions to you. After all, gongfu is within you. It must be experiential.



—Further Reading—

This month, it is worth rereading Part One of this series from May 2019. It has some great articles on the standards we use to judge a fine cup of tea during gongfu experiments. It also has the first and most primary experiments we conduct, many of which are prerequisites, or at least context for the ones in this issue.

TEA OF THE MONTH



Over the course of this month, we are returning to the topic of gongfu tea, with a whole new set of experiments for you to try. As we have often explored in these issues, the history of gongfu tea is intertwined with that of oolong tea. The term “gongfu tea” first referred to the mastery required to process fine oolong tea (Cliff Tea specifically) and then later indicated the tea itself. Oolong tea is difficult to make well, especially by hand; it requires decades of discipline, practice and sensitivity, of “gongfu.” Later, a brewing method was developed to prepare such well-crafted tea and it too was called “gongfu tea.” It only makes sense, then, that we would choose a fine oolong to accompany an issue devoted to the topic. As luck would have it, thanks to the kindness of Master Lu Li Zhen, whom we introduced in the January 2015 issue, we are able to share one of our favorite oolongs: Päränd.

“Päränd” means “Legacy” in Estonian (Quenya), and this amazing tea truly represents a legacy and a mastery worthy of the name “gongfu.” Everything about this tea speaks to heritage, mastery and refinement. And since oolong tea is often considered the most complex and difficult tea to create masterfully, Päränd might arguably be near the top of all tea production worldwide.

Päränd is from a biodiverse and healthy, clean farm on Mount Ali in Chiayi County, Taiwan. It rests at around 1,500 meters above sea level and is home to some older Qing Shin (Gentle Heart, 青心) varietal trees, ranging from twenty to fifty years old. This is a stunning part of Taiwan that we hope you all get the chance to visit one day.

More than the location the tea comes from, this tea is what we call “traditional oolong,” and in more ways than the term usually suggests. In the 1970s, as Taiwan opened and passed through a large economic boom, the tea and teaware markets blossomed. As production increased, there was a slow shift away from small artisanal farms toward larger plantations with higher yield. Since “traditional” oolong requires decades to master, has a narrow margin of error and is also more difficult to prepare well, producers were looking to adapt tea production toward

something that they could produce on a larger scale and that would be more fragrant, appeal to the mainstream and be easy to prepare with the simplest teaware. For this, they took inspiration from green tea. The trend toward greener, more lightly-oxidized oolong had already begun in the late Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) in the northern part of the island. Over time, this green, fragrant and light oolong came to dominate the market, changing tea culture around the world in countless ways, including new brewing methods and teaware.

When we call a tea traditional, it usually means higher oxidation and a deeper roast. Traditional oolong was oxidized between 40 and 70 percent and then well-roasted afterward. In that way, it could be sold in paper and stored for any amount of time. Since the moisture content in the leaves was low, tea lovers didn’t need to drink the tea faster or store it in vacuum-sealed pouches. Päränd is produced in such a way, with a higher oxidation and roast. Traditional oolong of this type has fortunately seen a resurgence in the last fifteen years.

Päränd is “traditional” in another unique way. Back in the day, tea was rarely finished at the farm the way it is today. “*Maocha* (毛茶),” or “rough tea,” was sent to shops and tea houses where the owners did the final roasting to their customers’ tastes. Roasting skills, like farming and processing techniques, were handed down generationally at tea shops. Over time, they became refined secrets that brought the unfinished teas to perfection. Nowadays, there are very few tea shops left that do their own roasting. Some may roast a tea or two for fun or as a specialty item, but there aren’t many that roast all their teas the way Master Lu Li Zhen does. Päränd was carefully roasted over days using Master Lu’s own secret methods.

Due to Master Lu’s kindness in partially donating this expensive tea, we were able to share with you one of our favorite oolong teas. It is an ambrosia that melts in the mouth, expands throughout the entire nasal cavity, carrying you away in its embrace. There are no words for the glory that rises from a well-made cup of Päränd...



Päränd



Alishan, Taiwan



Traditional Oolong Tea



Taiwanese



~1,500 Meters



遺產



Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

Oolong teas like Päränd are ideally prepared gongfu tea. A traditional tea like this will only truly shine when it is prepared well. We can put a few small balls in a bowl and have a wonderful session, but we will then miss out on some of the fragrances, flavors and energy of this marvelous tea. Much of the energy (氣, Qi) of oolong tea enters the subtle body upward through the nasal cavity, as opposed to puerh or black tea, which enter in the stomach area. For that reason, drinking this tea gongfu also influences how we interact with the tea on a subtle and gross level, and therefore a true appreciation of it requires that we prepare it gongfu. After all, gongfu tea was developed because there were teas that were produced with such care, time, effort and skill that tea lovers felt they deserved the same attention to detail in preparation. Legacy has certainly had a tremendous amount of time, care and mastery invested in it, resulting in one of the most exquisite oolongs we know, and we therefore want to brew it to its greatest potential. That said, if you don't have any gongfu teaware or know-how, you can brew this tea leaves in a bowl. You may also want to sign up for our gongfu tea course!

This month, we thought we would consider how the shape and behavior of the tea leaves being prepared influence our choice of teaware and our brewing method. Different leaf-shapes behave differently—by “behave” we mean the way we place them in the pot and the way the leaves open after steeping. For that reason, different shapes of leaf find their ideal in certain teapot shapes. This obviously should influence our choice of teapot. If we have large, striped leaves, for example, we may want to use a pot with a wider opening so that the leaves don't get broken going in. We may also want a pot that is flatter and wider, so the teas have room to open uniformly. (For a more detailed list of teapot shapes for certain teas see the April 2020 issue.) A round-body pot is the best all-around choice if we have only one pot, of course, but with ball-shaped oolongs like our Tea of the Month, a round body is perfect. We hope to brew our tea in such a way that the leaves all open uniformly and do not get crowded up against the spout side of the pot, which would cause them to open at different rates as opposed to opening together. Allowing the leaves to open uniformly makes the tea smooth and allows the flavors and fragrances to progress in harmony, meaning that the full potential of flavor, aroma and energy will be manifest at each stage of the session. We should also be careful in the first steeping or two with ball-shaped oolongs in particular, as they can move around the teapot more easily. One way to mitigate this is to do a slightly longer rinse, allowing the leaves to open a little more.

We can also pay attention to the cups we use for different types of tea. Since oolong tea enters the subtle body upward through the head, the smaller the sip we take, the better. This means smaller cups are ideal as they force us to take small sips. There is energy in the aromatic oils of all tea, but none more than oolong. For that reason, a fluted, tulip-shaped cup is nice for oolong tea. However, if we had to make a choice, we would choose a tiny cup over a fluted one for the finest oolong. Many times, our choices in gongfu tea are like this: a balancing act of mitigating this or choosing one favorable outcome over another in terms of teaware or brewing method. This is where experimentation really helps: as we learn about our tastes, our teas and what brings out the qualities in them that we enjoy, we can adapt our teaware and brewing methods accordingly.



Gongfu

Leaves in a Bowl

Water: spring water or best bottled
Fire: coals, infrared or gas
Heat: medium to high heat, fish-eye, 90–95 °C
Brewing Methods: gongfu or leaves in a bowl (gongfu is best)
Steeping: long, single flash, then growing (for gongfu; simpler for leaves in a bowl)
Patience: 20–30 steepings (gongfu)

茶 With ball-shaped oolong teas like this, it is helpful to watch how much tea we put in the pot. Each ball is a leaf set and will therefore unfurl quite a bit. Tea always needs room in the pot.



Introduction to Gongfu Experimentation

茶人: Connor Goss

Gongfu tea is about brewing the finest cup of tea possible. In our tea tradition, that means a patient and well-structured cup of tea full of flavors, aromas and sensations in the mouth and throughout the body. It requires a lot of skill and practice to consistently brew a fine cup of tea. And this skill must be *within* us, a part of who we are. True gongfu is not a collection of information, nor is it tips and tricks we use to practice various skills. Gongfu isn't a collection of tea or teaware, nor is it a formulaic procedure for brewing. It is not the recipe, the knives, the pots or pans, but the skill and heart of the chef that makes the best dish. Gongfu is the skill to know which pot to use for which tea, to effortlessly grab the right amount and pour from the right height, adapting each tea, session and even steeping to the needs of the moment. We should brew the tea in a way that brings out its greatest potential and yet leaves no trace of the brewing or the brewer. That is easier said than done...

We conduct experiments to help us understand all the details that go into brewing gongfu tea. When each aspect is more fully understood, we can begin

to make progress toward experiential wisdom. The Buddha said that true wisdom is weighed on two scales: concordance with the teachings of the wise and concordance with our own experience. Tradition without experience is dogma, and an experience without tradition is rootless and fleeting. A tea tree needs a strong crown and roots. Without the use of experiments, we do not have a foundation from which we can make progress and share our wisdom. If we are to confidently prepare finer teas and talk about quality, we need to have an experiential understanding that has come as a result of our own practice—otherwise we are just following the words of others without any direct connection to our own experience. Experiments are the way we reach our destination. Each experiment is like a signpost on the path we journey, guiding us through a set of methods and understandings that lead to greater sensitivity to tea, ourselves and Nature. We are fortunate to have a traditional gongfu brewing method that has been passed down through the generations, preserved through the spirit of experimentation by those before us. For me, experimentation to

directly correlate my experience with the wisdom I was taught is akin to the Zen master and poet Basho saying that he did not seek to ape the ancestors, but rather to “seek what they sought.” I seek what my teacher and his sought.

These experiments not only increase our sensitivity, they also empower us with the vocabulary and ability to communicate clearly what we are doing, how we are doing it and why each facet is important. The more experiments we conduct, the stronger our foundation will be, which then allows us to more confidently talk about tea with others. We have experiential understanding that has come from lots of testing and practice rather than just from copying others' methods or memorizing information.

The easiest experiments to do, and the ones we suggest starting with, are the type in which we compare two cups directly and side-by-side. Many of these experiments were described in Part One (the May 2019 issue). Other more challenging experiments compare one steeping versus the next. Those may require more sensitivity to do as time passes between the initial tasting and the second variable.



Still others require that we compare whole sessions one to the next, using the same tea at different times or even on different days. Some experiments are devoted to understanding teaware in terms of shape, design, function or material, while others focus on certain skills, like the way we pour water from the kettle or hold the teapot. Finally, some experiments may compare our posture or state of mind from steeping to steeping or session to session.

Some of what we gain through improving our tea preparation is an increased sensitivity, which affects all areas of our lives. Of course, this same sensitivity is a requirement for doing the experiments in the first place—creating a kind of feedback loop in which we notice our sensitivity increasing and then our ability to experiment, which increases our sensitivity in turn... Focusing on honing our sensitivity is always helpful. Beyond experimentation, diet, sleep, exercise and a good state of mind all help. Of course, there is no better way to increase your sensitivity than through meditation. This would ideally be a regular daily practice. We also recommend taking some time before conducting an experiment to

meditate. Perhaps closing the eyes and following the breath for a few minutes to quiet the mind. The more connected we are to our bodies, the easier it will be to notice the differences.

Getting Started

There are a few things you can apply to your journey of experimentation that will allow you to dive in more easily and gain inspiration through the results of your experiments. It is important when conducting experiments to use a tea you are intimately familiar with. Choosing the right tea for each experiment is also important and will depend on the parameters of the experiment. An example of this is using more fragrant teas for experiments that are designed to measure how different factors in teaware or method influence the fragrance of the tea. Another example is choosing simpler teas for experiments focusing on texture as a fragrant/flavorful tea often distracts us from mouthfeel. The same is true of new or exotic teas: their flavors and aromas can pull us away from the subtleties of texture. For the same reason,

we often brew teas with fewer leaves, in a light way, when conducting texture/mouthfeel-based experiments.

Most experiments require a heat source, a kettle and cups. Unless it is an experiment comparing heat sources or kettles, we suggest using the ones you are most familiar with. Glass and clay kettles are excellent choices. We also recommend using identical, white, tulip-shaped porcelain cups (cups that are slightly flared at the rim). The shape and color are especially important for certain experiments. All other teaware and accoutrements should be organized on your own, such as scoops and sticks, tea towels, notebooks, chaxi and other elements necessary to make tea in your space and conduct experiments. The primary materials specifically required for each experiment are listed in each experiment. It is helpful to keep these relatively consistent. We want to get good at isolating the influence of a particular factor, be it shape, material or method, so keeping everything around it consistent over time helps us get familiar with a “reference” of what a tea can do and therefore to become more sensitive to the differences in our experimental variables.

Keeping a notebook is very helpful for mapping out these experiments over the course of many sessions. This way, you can clearly record your journey and continually refine or change the experiments you conduct based on your own experience, starting from a set of traditional experiments and then beginning to create your own as you explore subtler aspects of the brewing method. It is also helpful to repeat experiments, returning again and again to the same principles. A notebook will help with this. It will also help you to notice more general trends over time, from session to session. Some experiments are easily expanded to try the same material, shape or technique with different teas. In other words, it is worth exploring if our conclusions hold true across different genres of tea, consulting our notes over time as we practice.

The most important advice we have with regard to experimentation is to have fun. Around here, our primary approach to tea is ceremonial, so naturally we conduct our experiments outside of our tea ceremonies. However, we do them in the name of our love for tea. We also take the time to just enjoy tea casually, so we aren't always sitting in formal ceremony or doing experiments. This makes us more relaxed around tea and teaware, which is an aspect of gongfu as well. Experiments can be fun and playful and shouldn't be overly serious. Learn through playful experimentation, like a curious child excited to explore and learn. In no way should the experiments feel like a chore. Conduct them to improve your brewing skills and understanding, and also to enjoy making and sharing more and better tea! When you see for yourself how one tiny detail can change everything, and then you consider all the details that go into brewing gongfu tea, it becomes very exciting to know just how much you can improve your tea through self-discipline, practice and joyful experimentation. In that way, many of us find a road back to the awe, wonder and curiosity we naturally radiated as children.

The Ten Qualities

While tea is ultimately an aimless activity enjoyed for its own sake, we have found that there is a need to have

a standard through which we evaluate each cup so that we can make clear progress toward brewing a finer cup of tea. We cannot conduct experiments without a quality standard we use to evaluate which cup is "better." Archers need the bullseye to practice, and to see if changes in technique or equipment increase precision and accuracy. How would you tell if a new bow was better for you by shooting arrows in random directions? And if shooting an arrow wherever you like wouldn't help you know which bow was better, how could it get into the subtler details of feather type and shape on the arrow, stance, or even breathing techniques during release? Brewing tea however we like is okay for casual sessions, but we will never be able to make progress or express our experiences to others if all our tea-making is casual and our understanding of quality is not articulated. We also need a measure of quality in order to cooperate with a teacher. Without a shared understanding of what we are aiming for in each cup, we cannot know if changes in materials, shape or technique are "right." We therefore recommend articulating your quality standard at the outset (at least to yourself), so you know what it is that you are seeking and what makes a fine cup of tea. There is no absolute, ultimate "right" or "wrong" in tea, but there are certainly differences that result from using different materials or techniques. Those differences may or may not facilitate the goals of your brewing method, which is the main reason for conducting experiments in the first place: to increase sensitivity and make better tea.

The standards we use are the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea. They are based primarily on texture, also called "mouthfeel (*cou gan*, 口感)." We have found that the sensations one feels in the mouth and the texture one experiences when drinking tea can be used more clearly to evaluate the different aspects of our brewing. They can then be used to engage in discussion with others or work more closely with a teacher to journey further along the path of tea. In this way, each experiment leads us toward the finest cup of tea possible. In the end, it is we who are changed. Of course we find that we get better at preparing tea, but we also learn more about ourselves, the world

and others along the way, finding connection and meaning through the finer cups we make. On the one hand, a life spent in search of the perfect cup is not wasted, and on the other, they are all perfect... We invite you to use these standards when conducting experiments, or to clearly articulate an alternative set of values so that when you say that cup A is better than cup B, or technique A is more skillful than its alternative, you know exactly why it is so and in what ways.



THE TEN QUALITIES OF A FINE TEA

好茶的品質

1) Splashes to the upper palate

This is an excellent quality to start with. It's easy to sense and happens right away with a fine tea. The sooner it splashes and the farther it travels across the palate, the finer the tea.

2) Travels back on its own

A fine tea doesn't require us to push it back. It should move from the front of the mouth to the back, almost like air traveling back on its own.

3) Smoothness (i.e., round, thick and structured)

This is one of the main criteria for a fine cup of tea. All fine teas are smooth in the mouth with a "roundness" to the structure that is thick and held together, as opposed to unstructured tea that can be sharp, thin and coarse in the mouth.

4) Coats the mouth

If you close your eyes, you should be able to sense the tea anywhere in your mouth. Lower-quality teas sink or get stuck near the front, but fine tea coats the entire mouth no matter where you focus your attention.

5) Goes down on its own: easy to swallow

In the same way that tea travels back on its own, it should continue down on its own. It should be swallowed very easily, as if by itself, not pinching the throat or forcing us to control the swallow, to push it down in any way.

6) Soothing in the throat

Next, after a fine tea coats the mouth and swallows easily, it should also soothe the throat, making it feel comfortable and coated.

7) Salivation

Good teas cause salivation, as opposed to drying out or parching the mouth. It's a refreshing sensation that almost feels as if you continue drinking the tea after it's been swallowed.

8) Fragrance rising up the back of the nasal cavity, filling it entirely

Teas that linger in the front of the mouth and nose are lower-quality teas. Fine teas have a fragrance that moves and rises up the back of the nasal cavity or the inside of the back of the neck, filling it completely. This can be likened to high-quality incense that is gentle and slowly rises from the back as opposed to cheap incense that "smacks" you in the front of the face.

9) Hui gan (回甘): minty coolness on the breath

We liken this to the sensation of chewing peppermint gum on a snowy mountaintop while breathing in and out deeply. It's not the flavor or aroma of peppermint, but that cooling, refreshing sensation returning on the breath after you've swallowed the tea. This is not to be confused with "hui tian (回甜)," meaning a "returning sweetness."

10) Deep and relaxing Cha Qi (茶氣)

This is a more subtle quality that goes beyond mouth sensations, but we include it here because all fine cups of tea have this quality or effect. It's easiest to think of this as a general sense of ease and relaxation, but it is also a topic with countless layers to unfold.

EXPERIMENT ONE

• Three cups

> MATERIALS:

- 250ml pot
- 3 porcelain cups
- 2g light tea
- Spring water

> OBSERVATIONS

- First cup - loss of temp fast in the mouth, very little aroma
- Second cup - slightly warmer in mouth, coating, hot still feel spin and buzz of bubbles
- Third cup - Much warmer

Part II

Gongfu Experiments



Posture & Grounding

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 One porcelain cup per person

Tip: In gongfu tea, it helps a lot to focus on the elbow as the fulcrum of energy for all movements. Let the elbow be the motor of the arm, leaving the shoulder and the upper and lower arm loose, relaxed and free.

Procedure:

This is a good experiment to try while standing up. If you have a table where you can brew tea while standing, give it a try. However, whether you are sitting in a chair or in a seated position on the ground, the experiment can still be conducted. If you are standing or sitting in a chair, you want to place your feet parallel and shoulder-width apart, keeping the knees comfortably bent. If you are sitting on the ground, you want your tailbone and legs to be firmly connected to the ground, though feel free to elevate your hips on a cushion or pillow. The idea is to focus your attention on a grounding sensation, noticing where your body makes a firm connection to the floor, anchoring you to the earth below. In all positions, you want a straight back and neck, relaxed shoulders and a free range of motion in your upper body and arms. Breathe naturally and make tea as you normally would. What do you notice?

Once you have established a good posture while brewing tea, you can slightly lift one leg (or knee if you're cross-legged) and brew again. Try lifting one leg for one cup, then the other leg for another cup. If you're sitting in a chair, you can try lifting both legs while brewing. Notice what muscles are activated, where your attention goes and how important balance is while brewing tea. To exaggerate the effects of posture on brewing, you can slouch down and try brewing all bent up and doubled over. You may also want to try leaning to the left or right and see what happens. Pay attention to the effects posture has on your brewing and also on the tea.



Importance & Implications:

Posture matters, so there are many extensions to this experiment that deal with our posture while brewing tea. Tradition states that it is ideal to establish a strong connection to the Earth in your lower body and to allow all movements to flow from there. This experiment opens up all kinds of implications about the relationship of our posture to the final cup, to our experience of brewing and to the ergonomics of living well. What are some other aspects of posture that you think are relevant to tea brewing? How can experiments in posture during tea influence other areas of your life? If you brainstorm, we are sure that you can devise several different experiments that relate posture to tea preparation. What's more, what about tea drinking? Does posture also influence or change our ability to drink the tea? Our sensitivity?





A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a dark, rounded kettle. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the fingers wrapped around the handle. The kettle is dark and has a smooth, rounded shape. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown.

Kettle in the Offhand

燒水壺在不慣用手

Materials:

茶 A purple-sand clay teapot

茶 A kettle that you are familiar with

茶 One porcelain cup per person

Procedure:

You will need to transfer the heat source to either side of your tea space during this experiment. You could just pass the kettle from hand to hand as you brew tea, but it's better to really get a feel for what's going on in this experiment by dedicating a few infusions with the kettle on either side of your tea space. Therefore, keep the heat source on your dominant-hand side for at least a few infusions, brewing as you normally would. Then move the kettle and heat source to your offhand and brew a few more times. Record any differences you notice, especially in terms of balance, mechanics, and the overall fluidity of motions at the tea table. You may also notice differences in the tea itself, which are important to note and then consider why this would be. (The two hands needn't be done at once; the picture here is just for creativity, though you can try if you want.)

Importance & Implications:

Brewing tea with skill has a lot to do with balance, and these experiments help us to discover where we are balanced and what needs adjusting. The kettle is the heaviest of elements to handle while brewing tea, so the immediate response in most cases is to use our dominant hand to control the kettle. There is certainly some logic to that. In the same way, we almost always use the dominant hand to hold the teapot. However, it is interesting to see how the dynamics of our brewing change when we switch to holding the kettle in our offhand. You may have a strong habit of using the kettle in your dominant hand and conclude in the beginning that it feels more comfortable to brew like this. In that case, it's a good idea to come back to this experiment and continue questioning the importance of having the kettle in the offhand. Over time, it will also become second nature to hold it like this. How does this shift your balance? Where in the tea-brewing steps are you freer and more flexible by having the kettle in your offhand? Does it offer the possibility of using both hands to perform some actions simultaneously? And why isn't that possible when the kettle is in the dominant hand? Focus on the bigger picture: What are the benefits of placing the heaviest element on the "weaker" side of the body?

順 暢



Pouring Along the Walls of the Cup

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 Two porcelain cups per person

Tip: Try to pour continuously and fluently from cup to cup, moving in a circular fashion. Pay attention to the location you choose to move the stream from cup to cup. There is a bridge to cross from cup to cup.

Procedure:

In this experiment, we will compare pouring around the inner rim of one cup to pouring in the middle of another cup. As the second cup fills up, this will mean we are pouring into the tea liquor. You can even exaggerate this, creating bubbles and splashes. Then, drink the two cups side by side and notice any differences. Pay attention to the texture of the tea.

Once you have done this experiment a few times, you can repeat it from steeping to steeping or even from session to session, applying each technique to multiple cups. This will allow you to experiment not just with the effect pouring on the rim versus into the liquor has on the tea itself, but also on your fluency, precision and the overall feel of pouring. Start by placing the cups in a fashion that allows your overall pouring motion to be roughly circular as you move from cup to cup. (Remember that circular movements are always toward the center of your body.) Carefully place the pour around the inner rim of each cup (not so close to the edge that you spill and waste tea). This is one reason why tulip-shaped cups are important (cups that flare out slightly at the rim). Not only are they comfortable to drink from but they facilitate the placement of your pour. You should pour only a small amount of tea into each cup as you move fluently from cup to cup, filling each one gradually as you go around. This means as you pour around the inner rim of one cup, you are also moving toward the next cup, ideally crossing over at the point where the rims of the cups touch. Then, in the second round or in a later session, pour into the center of each cup as opposed to the rim. Allow the stream to splash into the liquor in the center, making ripples and bubbles.

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Importance & Implications:

How and where you place your pour is important in gongfu tea. Many of us lose a sense of connection at the spout, but it is possible to extend that sense of connection into the pour (and beyond) with additional concentration. This experiment helps us to focus on placing the liquor in the cups instead of “pouring” it. What is the difference between dumping and controlling the pour? Does controlling the pour mean we are constricted? Can we pour along the cups’ sides as freely as the center? This experiment also helps us explore what happens to the tea when the surface is disturbed or bubbles are produced, which could evolve into an experiment of bubbles versus none. What do the bubbles do to the tea? Is this desirable, and if so, for all teas? What does an unruffled surface provide, on the other hand? And how would prewarming the cups (an experiment we did in Part One/ the May 2019 issue) influence pouring on the inside rim versus splashing in the center of the cup?

Zisha & Hongni

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 A red clay teapot (close in size/shape/design to the zisha)
- 茶 Two porcelain cups per person
- 茶 A timer and scale

Tip: Focus on holding the Yixing pot properly. This is another experiment worth doing. It was covered in depth in last month's issue (April 2022) with detailed pictures of the two most common ways people hold teapots. That experiment is worth doing before doing this type of experiment.

Procedure:

You can do this in two simple ways. One method is to have a session using a *zisha* (紫砂, purple-sand clay from Yixing) teapot first and then a *hongni* (紅泥, red clay from Yixing) teapot second, recording your observations after drinking the tea from each pot separately. The other method is to brew in both pots at the same time, pour into two cups, and drink them alternately, recording any differences you notice. You need to be more careful in the second method to time the infusions carefully and get equal infusions. We recommend using a scale and timer if you choose to conduct the experiment that way. Also, there can be differences between the right and left hand, so you may want to switch hands from steeping to steeping. Ideally, the two pots will be identical in size, shape and design. (We have ones from the same maker and even firing for this experiment.) Pay careful attention to the structure or texture of the tea as you drink from each cup. Really focus on qualities like splash to the upper palette, smoothness, how much the tea coats the mouth and how easily it swallows. Also pay attention to any temperature differences between each teapot.



Importance & Implications:

This is an experiment comparing purple-sand clay to red clay gongfu teapots from Yixing, because even if the shape of the teapots is the same, the composition of the clay is very different. Be sure to get authentic Yixing clay from the Yellow Dragon (黃龍山) or Blue-Green Dragon (青龍山) mountains. (If you have an inauthentic pot, you can experiment with that.) Both clays are unglazed and therefore in direct contact with tea, so they will have a great influence on the final cup that is worth exploring. Doing this helps focus our attention on clay composition. It is an experiment of material, in other words, inviting us to explore the world of clay types and their influence on tea. You can easily extend this to experimenting with other lead-free clays from Taiwan and China, perhaps comparing pots from Yunnan or Chaozhou to zisha ones. There is also a third family of clay types from Yixing, called “duanni (段泥),” that we can experiment with as well.





Pouring Height

注水高度

Materials:

- 茶 A kettle with an accurate pour
- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 One porcelain cup per person

Procedure:

In this experiment, you will be pouring from a set number of different heights from the kettle into the teapot (we recommend three). It is helpful to use a kettle with an accurate pour and one that you are accustomed to using. The heights from which you pour are not exact, but you should pour from roughly the same heights as you conduct the experiment in any given tea session and over time. The first pour can be low, close to the teapot opening, and relatively open, allowing the water to fill the pot more quickly. Pour in circles to evenly distribute the heat over the tea leaves without scalding any one leaf. The second pour can be elevated approximately 10 to 15 centimeters above the teapot, for example. And the third pour can be elevated approximately 20 to 25 centimeters above the teapot. Pour slower the higher you go to maintain control and accuracy as you pour into the pot. After each pour, drink the tea and take note of the differences you notice from each height. Record the type of tea you are drinking, as this experiment should be done with different teas over time. It will be useful to refer to your notes to compare how different teas respond to water poured from different heights.

Importance & Implications:

This is a long-term experiment that can be conducted in any given tea session but should be carried out over the course of many tea sessions to fully understand the implications of this technique. The height from which we pour may create changes in the temperature and structure of the water. It also influences the oxygen-water dynamic. You can carry out this type of experiment in a more casual setting, making it a very accessible long-term experiment; just remember to try it here and there for a steeping or two in various settings over time. It is not always easy to pour from the third height into small gongfu teapots, so you will also refine the accuracy of your pour and thus, your overall gongfu skills. Through this, we will start to pay more attention to the effects pouring strength, height and method have on the tea, connecting us to the process of tea preparation—to the gongfu.

Lid On or Off

Materials:

- 茶 One or two purple-sand clay teapots
- 茶 One or two porcelain cups per person

Tip: Patience (nai pao, 耐泡) is important in gongfu tea. It refers to the number of steepings we get from a tea. Keep this factor in mind when experimenting, especially when the variable being tested has to do with whole sessions.

Procedure:

Ideally this experiment is done from session to session, which is better since it prevents the effects of one method from contaminating the results of another. Simply brew the same tea twice, but keep the lid on between steepings for one session and take it off for the next. Pay attention to the number of steepings you get with each method, noticing if one is more patient than the other. If you have two identical gongfu teapots, you could also compare the differences side by side. Note that the first infusion for both teapots should be the same. Just brew as you normally would, and then after the first infusion, remove the lid from one teapot while keeping the lid on the other. After you have enjoyed your tea, place the lid back on one teapot and brew them again, side by side. After steeping and pouring out the tea again, remove the lid from the same teapot as before and drink both cups side by side. Now you can start recording any differences you notice from cup to cup. You may also want to hold the pots up and smell the wet leaves inside after the session is over. You can do this quickly during the lid-on session, but too often and you will be moving toward lid-off. Repeat as many times as you wish and try the same experiment again with different teas over time. Similarly, this experiment can be done with only one teapot, keeping the lid on for one round and removing it for the subsequent round, but this is not ideal as the influence of each method will be less distinguishable. This one is worth repeating with different types of tea.



Importance & Implications:

Temperature is one of the most crucial factors to consider in gongfu tea. It is a common practice in some tea traditions to remove the lid from the teapot after decanting the tea. Why is that? What do you gain from leaving the lid off? What is lost? Is this suitable for one type of tea and not another? What implications does this have on teaware that is designed to be more open? What effect does this have on the patience of the tea and the temperature of the liquid? Why does temperature matter so much? What about the texture of the tea with the lid on or off? The fragrance and flavor? What about the appearance of the wet leaves in the pot? On a subtle level, does the tightness of the lid affect this? It also has implications in terms of the shape of the lid and even what the lid offers us at all. Why have a lid on a teapot, in other words? As always, the proof is in the cup.





Cups Together or Cups Apart

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 Two or more porcelain cups

Tip: This is a point at which we can also revisit the balance between fluency and precision in our pour. The idea is effortless fluency with perfect accuracy. However, as beginners, we often have to choose. There is an experiment in Part One.

Procedure:

It is common to brew tea with the cups gathered together, often on a tray that collects any tea that may drip while pouring from the pot into the cups. The cups can be arranged in various ways when brought together on the tray. In one round, gather the cups in an arrangement and intentionally place each cup so that it touches the cups around it. Brew as you normally would, hand out the cups and drink the tea. In the second round, intentionally place the cups in approximately the same arrangement, but so that each cup is ever-so-slightly separated from all other cups. Brew in the same manner, drink the tea and record your observations. Repeat this as many times as you would like. Pay attention to the feel of pouring, the effect on the tea liquor and even the handling of the cups. You may find that you have to use a different method of pouring/decanting for each configuration. Note what feels natural in each instance. If you want a bonus experiment, you can do cups together in a rounder configuration and cups apart in a straight line.



Importance & Implications:

In situations with more than one cup, we must consider whether they are touching or slightly separated when gathered on a central tray. This is an interesting experiment that touches on the deeper aspects of the structure of tea liquor—what we call the “secondary effects,” which means the effect of not just what the tea or tea liquor is touching directly, but also what that is touching. In other words, we are getting into more subtle arenas of not just the cup itself, but what the cup touches. What effect does the touching have on the tea liquor? What effect does it have on the pouring experience? This experiment also connects to the precision/fluency experiment in Part One (May 2019 issue). Is it still possible to pour fluently around the inner rim, moving from cup to cup, if they are separate? Or do you have to focus more on precision as you lift and pour between each cup? What is gained and/or lost in each scenario?

Gaiwan Part 2

盖碗第二部

Materials:

- 茶 A porcelain gongfu-style teapot
- 茶 A porcelain gaiwan (similar volume as teapot)
- 茶 Two porcelain cups per person
- 茶 A timer and scale

Procedure:

In the ideal version of this experiment, you would have a gongfu teapot and gaiwan made from the same porcelain, of roughly the same volume and even fired near each other in the same kiln. (We commissioned this, so if you visit, you can repeat this experiment with ours.) This reduces the influence of the material as much as possible, allowing you to isolate the main variable here, which is shape—teapot versus gaiwan. In any case, any porcelain teapot (shaped like a conventional zisha pot) and porcelain gaiwan will suffice.

You can conduct this experiment at the same time or consecutively, brewing with the gaiwan first and the teapot second. If you are not familiar with using a gaiwan, it can take some time and practice to get the hang of it. Make sure to use a scale and timer so that you use the same amount of tea and steep it for the same time. This is an excellent opportunity to compare brewing vessels over as many steepings as possible. How are patience, temperature and structure affected over the course of an entire tea session? Enjoy the double tea session and take lots of notes.

Importance & Implications:

In Part One (May 2019), we looked at the difference between a purple-sand clay gongfu teapot and a porcelain gaiwan. With material out of the way as an influencing factor, what might account for any differences you noticed? Remember, “gaiwan (盖碗)” translates to “lidded bowl” and in modern times has become a very common gongfu brewing vessel, which is quite a shift from its historical application as a more casual brewing vessel used for leaves in a bowl tea. The experiment in Part One highlighted the importance of material and shape of the brewing vessel. In this experiment, however, we eliminate the difference in material so that we can focus more on the effect of shape and design by using a porcelain gongfu teapot and porcelain gaiwan. In other words, does the shape affect the quality of the tea if the material is the same? Do the body, handle, lid and spout of a teapot really make a difference? What are the differences in terms of overall patience, feeling and ergonomics? And, of course, what impact do they have on the tea itself? This is amongst our favorite experiments.





Teapot is a Pitcher



Materials:

- 茶 Two purple-sand clay teapots
- 茶 One fairness pitcher
- 茶 Two porcelain cups per person

Tip: Part One (May 2019 issue) has a wonderful and foundational experiment concerning pitchers that we consider a prerequisite to this one. The first and most important experiment, the “Classic Three Cups” experiment, also offers important context for this one.

Procedure:

One purple-sand clay pot will be used to steep the tea, while the other will act as a “pitcher.” The genuine pitcher (*cha hai*, 茶海/*gong bei*, 公杯) can be made of any material for this experiment. Glass, porcelain and clay pitchers are the most common. You may want to try different pitchers, adding the element of material as another factor in the experiment.

Place the actual pitcher and the teapot-pitcher next to each other. Having a tray to place them on will be useful but not essential. For this experiment, do not prewarm the pitcher, teapot-pitcher or cups. That can be a follow-up experiment that adds a further dimension. Otherwise, brew tea as you normally would, but instead, pour back and forth into each pitcher, which should end up being equal in terms of volume and infusion. You will need to carefully remove the lid from the teapot-pitcher to fill it, but then replace the lid before pouring into the cups. From each pitcher, then, pour into their respective cups and drink the tea alternately, recording your observations as you go. Repeat the experiment as many times as necessary.



Importance & Implications:

Most of us are familiar with the standard style of pitcher. They are called “fairness pitchers (*gong bei*, 公杯)” because the idea is that pouring all of the tea into the pitcher creates an equal infusion to share with your guests. It also promotes a more casual experience and has become one of the most-used tea implements in the world. In function, pitchers come from Japan. The Japanese method of using one pot as a brewing vessel together with another pot or pitcher, called a “yuzamashi,” influenced some tea lovers in Taiwan and evolved into the pitchers common today. However, the form of the modern pitcher was influenced by Western (primarily British) creamers used for adding milk to tea. The sentiment of “fairness” and the convenience of a pitcher are both rather nice because so much of tea is about socializing and equality, but does that function hold up in regular practice, and are the sacrifices worth the gains? What is it that differentiates the teapot from the pitcher? What role does the lid on a teapot play? Why is the spout or handle on a teapot designed the way it is? There is a lot going on in this experiment, making it one of the most fun and revealing experiments in our estimation.





Size & Shape of Cups

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 Cups of various shapes and sizes

Tip: Try to avoid mixing traditions by using cups that are really bowls, which we call “bups.” There is an important discussion about this on pp. 47–48 of this issue. The only good use for bups is as bowls for our children (#bupsareforkids).

Procedure:

For this experiment, you will need cups that differ in both size and shape, the more the better. If you can restrict the material to porcelain, that will better facilitate the experiment as it will remove the variable of material, but have fun and use what is available to you. Brew as you normally would, but do not prewarm the cups, which would also complicate the experiment. It may be difficult due to the different-sized cups, but try to pour equal volumes of tea into each cup. The simplest way of doing this experiment is to drink back and forth between the varied cups and record your observations over at least a few rounds.

You may find it fun and insightful to isolate certain cups and perform A/B tests, going back and forth between them—perhaps comparing large cups to small ones, or cups that flare out at the rim to those with vertical walls. The permutations depend on the selection of cups at your disposal, so have a blast and do as many A/B tests as you can. It’s an excellent way to practice creating your own experiments, and you will certainly learn a lot more about cups by doing so.



Importance & Implications:

The shape and size of gongfu cups are valuable qualities to look for. They directly influence the structure and temperature of tea in a noticeable way. The shape of a cup has a lot to do with temperature preservation and functionality. Some cups are so poorly designed that they don’t even function properly, perhaps because the rim curves inward or the walls are too thin to hold comfortably. Size is especially relevant in relation to the tea you are drinking. Different sizes also affect the way we drink from the cups since smaller cups force us to take smaller sips. Some teas are much more suitable to be drunk from small cups that force us to take tiny sips and appreciate nuanced details. However, others are more suitable in larger cups that we can take larger sips from. But we must be careful because there is a size threshold that should not be crossed—when a cup borders on becoming a small bowl. There is a lot to this, but the fact is that cup shape and size are important in gongfu tea.

Antique Cups

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 One antique Chinese porcelain cup per person
- 茶 One modern porcelain cup per person

Procedure:

This is a simple experiment comparing two different cups. You can even perform this experiment with water only, pouring from the kettle directly into the cups. Order can be important: start by drinking from the modern cup first, then the antique cup, then continue back and forth until finished. If you are brewing tea, then follow the standard gongfu brewing method, but do not prewarm the cups for this experiment since that will add another dimension (you can add that variable later). Repeat as necessary and certainly with different types of tea. If you are sensitive, you may want to switch hands each steeping as well. There can be a strong difference between our strong and offhand. Of course, this adds another variable to the experiment.

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他們不像以前那樣製作

Importance & Implications:

High-quality antique cups can be rare and much more expensive than modern cups. At a glance, they both serve the same function, so is the extra money and effort to acquire them worth it? Are the differences really that noticeable? Why is it that such old cups create a difference at all? How is the material different between then and now? This is a great experiment to repeat again and again, especially as your sensitivity to the texture or structure of tea is refined. This experiment opens up the doorway to antique teaware in general. We find that cups are the most affordable implement to find in antique versions, and are therefore a good place to start experimenting with antique teaware. From here, one may wish to explore other antique teaware and experiment with pots or kettles, for example.





Two Hands

Materials:

- 茶 A purple-sand clay teapot
- 茶 One porcelain cup per person

Tip: The September 2021 bowl tea issue has a guide for how to hold a bowl. The formal way to hold a gongfu cup is the same. It may be helpful to follow for the two-handed portion of this experiment.

Procedure:

This one is fun, easy and worth coming back to again and again. It observes three ways to hold the cup when drinking tea: with your dominant hand, offhand and both hands. You can switch among the three methods in any given steeping. Start by drinking with your dominant hand first, then your offhand, then both. Repeat over as many steepings as you like. You can also experiment with this variable from steeping to steeping or even for whole sessions. This is one of those experiments that we do now and again, even during casual sessions, just checking in to see what we feel over time.

When using both hands, you can experiment with a more formal way to hold the cup, which is similar to holding a bowl properly: the dominant hand will hold the cup from the side, while the offhand will support the base of the cup, acting as a flat foundation upon which the cup can rest. The thumb on both hands will anchor the cup at the rim, as will the index and middle fingers on the dominant hand. Keep your fingers lightly pressed together and relax your shoulders and elbows. Sit upright, lift from the foundation using your offhand and guide the cup gently toward your lips using the dominant hand.

Importance & Implications:

Using a single hand to do anything can conserve energy and bring a sense of ease and comfort. Sometimes, when doing so, we too often revert to our strong hand and lose connection with the offhand. Two hands can bring a sense of centeredness and even reverence. We put our hands together to pray and to greet others more formally. Another interesting experiment is to shake hands with a friend using one hand and then two, paying attention to the difference between the two. In the East, it is important to hand things to others with two hands as a gesture of respect, which is why hosts often pour tea with two hands or why businesspeople use two hands to present their card to one another. But is that just tradition, or does it have experiential validity? And if we do experience a difference when holding our cups with one hand versus two, what are the differences, and how could they be applied to different settings and teas or encourage different experiences? How does using one hand versus two change the way we relate to our tea? Why? This is an interesting experiment because its implications have far less to do with teaware material, shape, design or technique. Rather, this experiment focuses on our minds and the connection between mind and body.

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INTRODUCING

Online Gongfu Course

LEVEL ONE

We are proud to announce the release of the first of our online gongfu tea courses

茶人: Wu De (無的)

The closing of our Center and the global pandemic that followed immediately afterward were both revolutionary changes in our lifestyle. The latter was, of course, the catalyst for upheaval in everyone's daily life. The pandemic isolated us, halted travel and pushed our work and even friendships online. Without the ability to host courses here in Taiwan or abroad, we decided to create online courses. As with any change, this one brought with it great challenges, lessons and gratitude for its blessings.

The very first course we did was the Intro to the Way of Tea, which we hosted live online and then recorded for people to take later on. It was one of the most challenging teachings I have ever done. Before then, I had always sat and drank tea with the people I was sharing with. Instead, I found myself waking up, drinking tea alone and then talking to lights and cameras. Where were the eyes and the subtle cues we all use to know whether people are listening, understanding what we are saying and enjoying it? I learned a lot about teaching and about myself. In my real and living daily life—my experience of my

own body and mind—I am very much a student. I approach life with curiosity and a willingness to test, experiment and often bumble my way to new insights, all of which I record in copious notes. I study texts every single day and spend a lot of time questioning, reading, listening to my teachers and others' ideas and then returning to my own past assumptions with new questions. I also spend time dealing with my own mistakes, of course. All of this makes my daily, living experience feel like that of a student. Teaching is just a role for me, something I must do now and again. And overcoming the psychological barriers of being a student asked to play the role of a teacher is always challenging for me. I never feel ready to help others, nor qualified... My teacher once told me that I don't have to be ready, just okay with the fact that I am not. I still haven't figured out what all of that means, but I lean into it more and these online courses are helping me to do so.

Almost immediately after that, we started getting emails about hosting a gongfu course. I didn't see how that was possible. It took a year of search-

ing and questioning, two notebooks worth of scribbling, to finally press record on a camera and start the gongfu course. I had to talk with my teachers and figure out some important solutions before I felt comfortable teaching a gongfu course. There are many micro challenges in the process of recording a gongfu course and publishing it online, as well as a few macro ones that overshadowed the whole project and took a year to resolve. I'll share the biggest challenge we faced as the subject of this introduction to the course because I think it will offer a glimpse into what the course will be like and help you decide if it is right for you.

For me the biggest challenge in teaching a gongfu course online is that I want to make sure to pass on the context, philosophy, practice and techniques in the way that they were given to me. My teacher places a very strong emphasis on experiential understanding. He believes, as I do, that gongfu is not something you learn, but rather something you are. For that reason, he teaches through sensitivity training coupled with extensive experimentation (together and on your own).



He rarely tells you the answer. When you ask about a piece of teaware, a tea or a technique, he will set up an experiment right then and there, offering you the chance to experience the difference for yourself. If he doesn't have the proper materials at hand, he will the next time you meet. Almost everything I learned about gongfu tea, I learned in the form of experience and experimentation, not information or memorization. So how do you share a teaching based on experience and experimentation when the people you are teaching aren't sitting down for tea with you? When you were taught that the truth is in the cup, how do you teach that truth without a cup? How do you record that onto an SD card? How do you share a teaching based completely on personal experience over the Internet? This was the biggest challenge we faced regarding an online course, and frankly I spent many months feeling like it wasn't possible and should not even be attempted.

I have a whole notebook full of solutions to this problem, many of which are implemented in the course. The main approach I am taking to re-

solve the emphasis my tradition places on personal, experiential truth is that the online gongfu course will be divided into three levels. The first two levels will be recorded online and available as online lessons. Just as in our other online courses, you will be able to watch the lessons at your own pace, in your own home and in the way that serves you best. At the end of each of these two courses, there will be some "homework" for you to do. Then, the third course will be held live, either online or in person at locations around the world. Since the completion of each level will be a requirement for taking the next, the third level of the gongfu course will be made up exclusively of those who have completed Level One and Two, as well as all the homework for those courses. In that way, we can host Level Three whenever the demand is there—when there are ten or fifteen people who have taken the first two and are ready and willing to take the third.

Signups for the first level of our gongfu course are open now at a discounted price of \$288. This first level will cover the context, philosophy,

history, the teaware and several practical details to get you started on your gongfu journey. It includes over twenty hours of lessons plus supplementary materials. There will also be a live Q&A in July, after most of you will have had plenty of time to take the course. If you cannot attend the live Q&A or are taking the course after July 2022, don't worry—there will be a place to enter your questions for the Q&A and it will be recorded and therefore a part of the course for future participants. I am very excited to share this practice with all of you. Whether you want to learn to make a better cup of tea or are interested in a lifestyle, gongfu tea is a rich and vibrant world—one that has changed my life and taught me so much about tea, the world and myself.

Visit our course website to learn more and sign up for this life-changing course

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Bowl Tea &



Bowl tea and gongfu tea are two tea traditions that have been brought together in our Center like never before. Their journeys, separated by vast spans of time, culture and geographical boundaries, have finally come together under one metaphorically thatched roof. Cauldrons boil the Dao in one room and Mulberry Creek stoves heat water in the next. Cracked and repaired bowls on one shelf sit next to Ming Dynasty cups on the other. Gourd ladles billow with steam while purple-sand pots circle the walls of antique cups. A great tree forms a pillar at the center, nourished by spring water that infuses tea throughout our Hut. Charcoal is always ready and water is abundant. And this is what we hope to house in *Light Meets Life*: a Center for bowl tea and gongfu tea to thrive side by side. Students of the Leaf chop wood, fetch water and sweep the entryways. Incense and meditation in one hall, social laughter in another. And, of course, the wind sowing the pines... Lovers of tea from all directions are served by Vimalakirti in a room with ever-expanding walls. Tiny doors like portals into private worlds slide open, revealing tatami mats. I also envision dewy gardens and koi ponds. Bowl tea in the morning, a *qin* playing during midday gongfu tea, silence and

chanting welcoming the rising moon... It's a beautiful image, worthy of portrayal on a timeless scroll: arching pine trees, a flowing river, wispy clouds, smoke from a chimney, mountains in the background, plenty of empty space... I see it in each cup and in every bowl.

Bowl Tea

As a brewing method, "bowl tea" covers three of the five brewing methods we practice at the Hut. These are: first the simplest brewing method of placing leaves directly in a bowl and adding hot water; second, using a sidehandle teapot to steep the tea and pour into a bowl; and third is boiled tea, which is boiled either in a sidehandle teapot or cauldron and then poured or ladled into a bowl. We refer to these three bowl tea methods simply as "leaves in a bowl," "sidehandle" and "boiled tea." Though they differ in some of the teaware used and the brewing procedures, they all share the same spirit: one of simplicity, meditation, ceremony, medicine and healing, and equanimity, which is why they are all generally referred to as "bowl tea," and why we see them as the same.

As a practice of drinking and sharing tea in any of these three methods, bowl tea is an invitation to accept things as they are. That is a very necessary invitation in a world that often conditions us to shape and mold reality to suit our vision. Think about all the times within any given day, even in the smallest, most insignificant of situations, when we consciously or unconsciously want things to be other than they are. In my experience, a large proportion of my suffering lies in this habit, which further necessitates a practice to help me observe that impulse and, instead, align with the situation as it is, like a leaf flowing *with* the current of the river as opposed to fighting it. Then, even when I do need to steer, I find that from calm acceptance I can use my stick to change things in a more effective way. And this kind of acceptance and understanding can be found in a simple bowl of tea. You can drink that impulse-to-do and instead decide to sit in stillness, as the leaves sit silently before you. It's a real gem to develop the skills of acceptance and tolerance, flexibility and objective observation, composure and calmness. This is summed up as "equanimity," and this quality is exactly what a practice of bowl tea helps us to cultivate. Tea comes from a space beyond our

Gongfu Tea

茶人: Shen Su (聖素)



differences, our ideas of what should or should not be. Tea comes from a forest of connection, openness and suchness. When I drink bowl tea, I drink of suchness. And that suchness reminds me of interbeing.

This kind of equanimous approach to drinking tea is even more important when we consider the sharpness of our discriminating mind—a brilliant tool when applied skillfully and in the right circumstances. But when it overflows into our every experience and everything is observed through a lens of evaluation, of desirable and undesirable, then we quickly lose perspective. On an absolute level, quality is mind-made and completely subjective. In bowl tea, there *is* no “too strong” or “too weak,” “too hot” or “too cold,” nor “too much” or “too little.” The tea is never “too” anything. There is no “too” in tea. Tea comes from a place beyond the “toos.” It comes from a place of suchness, where it is as it is, wholly and completely. It’s a rare privilege to accept that outlook into my body and life in the moment of drinking a bowl of tea.

This does not mean we just drop all attempts to prepare the tea skillfully, but it is an important attitude to adopt when the time calls for it. If we think of bowl tea like a discriminat-

ing-mind-switch, we learn that there are times in tea and in life to turn the evaluating mind on and off. Cultivating that ability to switch our discrimination on and off in any given situation is where the real skill lies, which is why we need to practice. Bowl tea is a great daily practice, a daily invitation to accept things as they are, which is especially useful in a world that is constantly changing. It relates to the Zen axiom that truth is complete and actualized in this very moment where all of time and space exist. Eternity streams through our experience, and we hold it in this very bowl. Bowl tea is, in essence, about letting go.

Tea has long been known as the “Great Connector.” It has a healing capacity to connect us to Nature, ourselves and others. In its essence as leaves, water and heat, and in a ceremonial space, we are brought closer to the source of the natural elements. When we step closer to the source of anything, we feel a much greater sense of connection to it. If you’ve ever received a handmade gift, grown your own food or gathered your own water, you know how meaningful it is to know where something came from and who made it and to feel the care in it; and you also know how much more you appreciate and respect it as a result. Ultimately,

everything has the same source: everything comes from and returns to Great Nature (Dao). The more often we remember that, the more likely we are to maintain a healthy perspective toward our limited lifespans.

When we hold a bowl of tea, we are reminded that these leaves came from the crown of a tree, one rooted in a diverse ecosystem; we are reminded that the bowl was made of the clay of the very Earth we sit on; we are reminded that water makes up most of our own bodies and that to feel gratitude for water is to feel gratitude for ourselves. When you drink your tea, it courses through you like water courses through the streams, rivers and lakes. It is a part of you like the river is a part of its natural environment. There is an old saying that “tea brings Nature to society.” Even amidst the chaos of city life, a bowl of tea reminds us just how deeply connected we are to the source of Nature, no matter where we are, with just leaves, water and heat.

Through the bowl we connect to the real suchness in our own hearts—the doorway through which we find our connection to the world. Tea can pass through that door if we let it, and slowly but surely open the floodgates of interbeing, carrying us with it to a greater connection beyond separation.

As that same tea courses through you like the rivers among the mountains, you can feel the warmth in your body, the sweetness in your mouth and the state of your mind. Tea, like meditation, facilitates a calm and awake state of mind. Only when we take the time to rest in stillness will the distractions of the mind fade away like turbid water that naturally clarifies when left alone. In that moment we can see ourselves more clearly, when the distractions and impulses of the mind are given time and space to separate and the clarity of presence rises to the top. Life through this lens can look dramatically different and is therefore an important lens through which to observe ourselves: a lens without drama, ego, fear or conflict. After drinking a bowl of tea and letting those traits subside, who are you? And once we have peered into calmer, more still waters and seen who we are, it is then easier to maintain connection to the depths of who we are even as the thoughts and the world move. We then realize that we didn't really need to create stillness; it was always there, at the heart of the movement. "The still heart moves freely," as they say in Zen.

We need connection to others like we need air. We are communal by nature. Through that same lens—free of the impulse to do, calm and awake—how does that affect our ability to connect to others? Bowl tea is about equality. When we drop everything that separates us, we are left with what connects us. A bowl of tea, shared freely in the spirit of equality, can bridge new relationships, mend wounded ones and enrich old ones. Without the need to say anything, without the distractions of technology, with just a little space, stillness and presence, I am always astonished at how much more connected I feel to others over nothing more than a few bowls of tea.

I had an old coach who used to say, "advanced techniques are the basics mastered." I found it very serendipitous when my tea teacher said the same thing many years later. Sometimes one of the jobs of a coach is to hold athletes back (lest they injure themselves). This requires an intimate understanding of each individual athlete's abilities so that the coach can safely push the boundaries of growth, considering long-term benefit over short-term gain because

athletes can easily overlook it. This is to prevent over-ambition from causing injury. It's too easy to pass off the basics and seek out so-called "advanced techniques," which are usually pursued out of self-serving and narrow-sighted ego goals. We often miss the bigger picture and can even ironically prevent real advancement by blindly trying to reach a "higher level."

At our school of tea, we always teach the basics of leaves in a bowl to students first. Bowl tea is the foundation upon which all other tea brewing methods will be supported. Like any foundation, it needs to be strong and stable. You don't remove the foundation once you're finished building it. It's always there, right at your feet, supporting you whether you know it or not. It's not something you graduate from, but always return to, to remember where your strength comes from. If there is any urge to move on from bowl tea or a resistance to maintain it in your practice over time, then something is off keel. Luckily, a renewed perspective is *always* just a bowl away. As students of tea, we must ask ourselves why the coaches, teachers, sages and saints—those who have walked farther than we have—remind us to return to our roots and to master the basics. And where does our desire to complicate or increase, our desire for more and more, come from? Sometimes more isn't better, it is just more.

Bowl tea is the perfect place to start a tea journey because it is accessible, affordable and simple to learn. Gongfu tea, on the other hand, can be intimidating, initially expensive and complicated to learn and understand all the steps. If you want to invite a tea practice into your life, all you need is a bowl, some loose tea, hot water and time. To establish a tea practice, we often recommend people prepare a few bowls of tea in silence each morning before doing anything else—for at least one week. This kind of approach to brewing tea is accessible and simple, yet the effects are impactful enough to solidify a tea practice in daily life. It lays the foundation for a life of tea rooted in the basics that will, over time, flourish into a strong practice, like a deep-rooted tree branching off in its own beautiful and unique way. The natural winds of time will not knock over such a tree. The roots are the tree's

strength in the same way that bowl tea is the strength of a tea practice in this tradition. The advanced techniques, therefore, are the basics of bowl tea mastered. This should not be underestimated.

Lastly, as stated in the beginning, bowl tea is an invitation to accept things as they are. More concisely, bowl tea is an invitation to accept—*period*. Learning to receive tea first is an oft-overlooked and yet incredibly important lesson. The desire to be in the spotlight, to be the one serving tea, can get the better of us, especially in the beginning stages of our practice. We must learn to accept tea first before we can start serving others. A degree



of hesitation to start serving immediately is a healthy sign. If our early inclination toward tea is outward oriented, something is wrong because the whole of tea is an inward Way. As the late Zen Master Thich Nhat Han said, “The way in is the way out.” In order to open into awakening, we have to steer inward, counter to our habit of seeking satisfaction outside. Tea is gentle; it trickles inward slowly and softly. And that takes time. If we haven’t let the inward path move sufficiently inward, how can we share it with others? We will then not be sharing the inward-oriented path of Tea, but rather the outward-oriented ego desires that the world has instilled in us.

It’s important to remember that the state of mind from which you serve will have a direct influence on your tea and your guests. Would you rather serve from a state of clarity and inner stillness or ambition and ego? We must cultivate those former qualities by receiving tea as the first stage of our practice. As Wu De often says, “receiving tea” means listening, receiving the wisdom of the world and of our heart. Even if you are brewing tea by yourself, you are both serving and receiving. That’s why creating a calm and clean space in which to prepare tea is critical—that environment will influence your mind, which can change your life. In the same way a cluttered and messy

office space invokes a sense of anxiety, an open and simple tea space invokes a sense of reception and calm. The room itself, open and serene, accepts you peacefully, which facilitates your ability to accept situations in general because the mind and environment are reflections of one another. Bowl tea is a practice of listening, not talking; it is an invitation and an exercise in receptivity, especially in the beginning, but also throughout your life of tea, for it will ultimately guide your ability to serve. To share an experience of receptivity, our being must be rooted in the stillness tea comes from. There is life wisdom in this. All tea lessons are life lessons, after all...



GONGFU TEA

工夫茶

Once you have cultivated some tea spirit through the practice of bowl tea, the desire to express that spirit in the form of a finer craft is natural. The beauty here is that the spirit is always present and comes through the skill, lending soul and substance established in a long-term bowl tea practice. A great craft is only as strong as its foundation. That skill, in this case, is gongfu, which simply translated means “mastery through focused practice and self-discipline.” This term can be applied to any discipline, be it archery, cooking, martial arts and, of course, tea. Gongfu tea, therefore, means to brew tea with skill developed through practice and discipline. In the way that bowl tea invites us to cultivate equanimity, gongfu tea invites us to refine our sensitivity. Both are invitations to cultivate and explore.

The “aim” of gongfu tea, in one sense, is to bring out the best the tea has to offer, to brew the finest cup of tea possible by refining each step in the process of tea preparation. Traditional gongfu tea requires careful consideration of the tea, teaware, water, heat source and brewing method. As we increase our resolution and look at gongfu tea more closely, we find endless details to explore and refine in order to prepare a finer cup of tea. The teaware can be explored in terms of its material, shape, design, function and age; the water can come from bottles, filters, springs, wells or streams; the heat source may be electric, gas-powered or charcoal-based; and the method can be better understood through endless experimentation. The permutations, then, of these broad aspects of gongfu tea offer a lifetime of adventure in refinement and curiosity. This is quite the opposite of bowl tea, which is oriented toward setting aside the discriminating mind and accepting things as they are. This is how the two brewing methods establish balance and harmony with one another: Knowing when to discriminate and focus on details and when to let go is a great skill indeed, which is why these brewing prac-

tices are of great importance in a life of tea and why they work together so harmoniously. Tea lessons are life lessons, and the potential for tea to be a Way of life is real and alive because of this balance.

By bringing out the full potential of a fine tea through skillful brewing, we get to further enjoy better tea, and we also learn to share those blissful cups with others, and give honor where honor is due: to the farmers, producers, shippers—and even further back—to the tea plants themselves, to the Earth, water and air, to the sun, moon and stars, without all of which there would be no tea in the first place. A lot has gone into the creation of this handful of leaves. The chain of gratitude is long—at one end, the beginning of time, and at the other, a cup of tea so divine... The more we focus on every little detail and prepare the best tea we can, the more we honor all that work. The farmers themselves craft fine tea through focusing on every detail, every skill at every step. We continue that in our brewing and bring each cup to its full potential. Of course, the gratitude doesn't end there, for we can then take the time to pause and fully enjoy those cups with our whole being, allowing them to become us and change us. If we live with more peace, harmony, respect for Nature and love, the whole circle is fulfilled.

Through all of this practice and discipline, we are developing the skills to perfect our tea brewing. However, the true craft has more to do with ourselves—our own self-cultivation. There is an old Chinese adage that the recipe to paint the masterpiece of calligraphy is to “perfect oneself and then paint naturally.” Similarly, we perfect ourselves and then brew naturally. When the brewing method becomes second nature and muscle memory takes over, we can begin to let go and brew free from concept, allowing the tea to brew itself. Though we may talk about the skill to brew fine tea as if it were “our” skill, gongfu has as much to do with getting out of the way and letting the

tea be brewed the way it wants to be brewed as it does with skills we have practiced. In the same way that an impurity in the water, kettle, teapot or cup would come through in the final infusion, so too, the impurities of our mind and spirit come through and affect the tea ceremony. Therefore, we use pure water and clean our teaware to prevent this, and so we must also “clean” ourselves through various forms of self-cultivation—purifying within and without. Even on the physical level, it's important to take care of our hygiene, to be free of strong scents that might influence the tea, and to dress in a manner appropriate to the occasion. In that way, the attention is on the tea, not on us. The tea can pass through us as a clear channel in the same way it passes through a clear kettle, pot and cup. We become a natural link in the chain that leads to a fine cup of tea, no different from the pot, kettle or cup, the sun, moon or stars, the earth, air or water. The ideal is that the brewer herself is as natural a part of the tea's journey from tree to cup as the rain or sun, as the farmer who lives amongst the trees and talks to them each day.

Gongfu tea is a refinement of technical skills but ultimately a refinement of the self. That refinement reduces the friction of our egos that would otherwise get in the way of brewing a truly fine cup of tea. We have to perfect ourselves and then brew naturally. The teacher can only point out the direction we need to travel in. It is our responsibility to find out what it means to perfect ourselves and the relationship between the perfect we become and the perfect we already are.

My teacher once asked during tea, “Quick! Touch the Nature closest to you,” a test that we all failed miserably by using our minds to measure the distance to nearby “natural” objects like the plants in the room. To perfect yourself is to know what to touch in that situation without second thought. A perfect cup of tea will come from that state of mind. Where is the closest Nature?





THE WINGS OF AWAKENING

覺知的翅膀

When holding a sword, a calligraphy brush or a sharpened chisel for sculpting wood or stone, control is achieved by a grip that is not too tight nor too loose. Too tight or too loose and you miss the subtle vibrations of the tool that are communicating to you, often resulting in something that is contrived or sloppy. The right tension is everything, and somewhere between tight and loose is the middle tension that allows us to connect with whatever we are doing. Meditation is also like this, as we must sit up and be awake, but also be relaxed—too loose and we get sleepy or distracted, but too tight and we get uncomfortable and sore. However, the perfect balance of Yin and Yang is always in flux, subtly waxing and waning between the two extremes, adapting to the constantly changing environment. There's an old tale in the *Zhuangzi* (莊子) that exemplifies this:

This retelling of the story of Duke Huan and the wheelwright is from *The Second Book of the Tao*, by Stephen Mitchell. It is a wonderful example of that perfect point of balance. All the books, words and Zen fingers can only point to “it,” to the Dao, but never touch it. Gongfu can be experienced only in your own heart and hands, and perfected only after many years of practice and ritual, discipline and ceremony. The story is brilliantly left open-ended, letting you decide whether the wheelwright's words of wisdom ended with a flash of enlightenment or perhaps a flash of the sword...

Gongfu and bowl tea are the strikes against the wooden wheel that must be perfectly balanced. Too much gongfu tea and you get stuck in the hard-headed grain, stuck in the spokes of ego, opinion and the discriminating mind, forgetting that on a truly round wheel, we are all connected. In short, too

much gongfu and we become snobby. And too much bowl tea, and we carelessly slide off the surface, never refining the shape of the wheel, brewing tea however we like, in some casual, raucous way, and therefore not making progress because the wheel won't turn if it isn't round. But these words, this whole article in fact, are just the dregs of my experience. You need to wash them away, fill and empty your own bowl or cup, and refine the wheel of your tea practice to truly touch the heart of the matter...

Therefore, bowl tea and gongfu tea complement each other so well, and we benefit greatly from both practices in a life of tea to achieve a balance between form and function. Bowl tea is more ceremonial, tending toward form over function. Gongfu tea requires more discipline, tending toward function over form. Bowl tea is not without function, nor is gongfu tea without form, but they have their natural tendencies. This is especially useful to understand when considering which brewing method to choose for your guests because they serve such different functions. Does this occasion require the discipline and function of gongfu tea to honor your guests and bring out the best the tea has to offer? Or perhaps it requires the ceremonial form of bowl tea to facilitate a temporary ordination, to wash away the dust of the world in a more meditative and relaxed setting. Do we hone in, or do we let go? The choices of brewing method, tea and teaware are all important decisions when brewing tea for others. Though they appear at opposite ends of the form-and-function spectrum, bowl tea and gongfu tea are flexible enough to suit every tea situation.

Knowing the differences between these brewing methods also means knowing how they relate to one another. Gongfu tea represents sensitivity, and bowl tea, equanimity. These are the two wings of the great albatross of awakening soaring over the ocean of Samsara.

*Duke Huan was reading a book at the upper end of the hall.
Pian the wheelwright was making a wheel at the lower end.
Putting down his mallet and chisel, he walked over and said,
“May I be so bold as to ask what Your Grace is reading?”*

“The words of the sages,” said the duke.

“Are these sages still alive?”

“No, they're long dead.”

“Then what you're reading is just the dregs they left behind.”

*“How dare you make such a comment on what I am reading!”
the duke shouted. “Explain yourself, or you die!”*

“Certainly, Your Grace,” said the wheelwright. “Here's how I see it. When I work on a wheel, if I hit the chisel too softly, it slides and won't catch. But if I hit it too hard, it gets stuck in the grain of the wood. When the stroke is neither too soft nor too hard, I know it—my hands can feel it. There's no way I can describe this place of perfect balance. No one taught it to me, and I can't teach it to my children. I have been practicing my craft for seventy years now, and I will never be able to pass it on. So too, when the old sages died, they took their understanding with them. That's why I said that what you're reading is just the dregs they left behind.”

太極



The Buddha said that equanimity and sensitivity are the wings to enlightenment. When in balance, they help to navigate a straight and true path. These attributes, even amidst the winds of life, which we all know can be strong, turbulent and chaotic, can help us to weather the storms we all must face.

There are times when we must heighten our sensitivity and pay attention to the details, and other times when we must let go of our discriminating mind and accept things as they are. The harmonious nature of these two brewing methods helps us to cultivate both skills, which is why they are both at the core of our tea tradition. This is also why we don't graduate from bowl tea and "move on" to gongfu tea. The tree doesn't uproot itself to grow tall and strong. Its strength and height are in direct proportion to its root structure and depth. When in balance, gongfu tea helps us to refine our sensitivities, and bowl tea helps us to maintain a humble demeanor. As I said earlier, too much gongfu tea can lead to snobbery, whereas too much bowl tea may lead to carelessness. They must be in balance to act as the wings of awakening. In mastering these two aspects of tea simultaneously, we explore tea at all levels, from the depths of spirit to the delights of the senses, from simplicity to refinement and from the gross to the subtle.

We don't have to choose the method so much as we need to *listen* to the occasion and what it calls for. Upon listening, would gongfu tea or bowl tea serve the occasion best? Remember, it's not about the tea *we* want to brew or the experience *we* want to create, but about understanding the function of each method so that we can "listen" for the one that best serves the situation. This is another reason we start with the foundation, with bowl tea, as it also helps us establish the receptivity and sensitivity to know when to use a bowl and when to use a cup. A silver kettle doesn't "choose" to make soft and sweet water any more than an iron tetsubin "chooses" to make strong and penetrating water. They each have their natural proclivity, as does each brewing method, and understanding that proclivity takes precedence over personal preference. Tea as a form of service to others requires us to let go of personal preferences and, instead, honor our guests and the occasion by tuning into the natural tendencies of the brewing methods. Let the tea do the work. She has been doing this a lot longer than we have and the tradition has laid the groundwork to make these decisions skillfully. We strive to be a clean and clear vessel through which the tea can reach our guests in its purest form. We listen carefully and practice both brewing methods diligently so that we may

better understand the specific role of each, welcoming discipline and ceremony in our lives and sharing what we cultivate with others. The ability to make perfectly balanced wheels that offer a smooth carriage-ride on the journey ahead, the journey of the tea, will certainly help us travel down many paths and over many terrains.

Honoring Our Ancestors

For several reasons, it is important to keep these practices separate from one another. They overlap naturally and do not require us as individuals to mix them together. They serve very different functions, and this should be honored by practicing these methods in the capacities they were taught to us. The energy of gongfu and bowl tea are very different. Blending them together unnecessarily demonstrates a lack of understanding of their respectful functions and the history of the tradition from which they were handed down to us. Each brewing method was designed and practiced over great lengths of time, then refined to fulfill a particular purpose in a life of tea. If our desire to brew however we want dilutes or negates that purpose, what does that say about our aim? Who am I to do whatever I want with the heritage that



defines these brewing methods? Who am I to meddle with tradition before I understand its roots and heritage? Do I really know better than the accumulated knowledge and power that has been passed down from generation to generation? At the same time, we shouldn't blindly follow tradition just because someone tells us to. We need experiential understanding and a deep respect for the ancestors of these traditions, who kindly handed them down to us so that we may learn and benefit from them as they did. It will naturally take time practicing them in their pure form before any adaptations become valid.

None of this is to say don't brew tea the way you prefer—in fact, you should brew tea the way you like. If your relationship with tea is casual and purely for enjoyment, you should simply enjoy tea for the sake of enjoying tea. That might sound contradictory, but it's one thing to brew tea however you like and another to take brewing methods from a tradition and then proceed to do whatever you like with them. Caretaking the wisdom and techniques handed down within a tradition is a great responsibility. To be enthusiastic about learning is important to us all, but it does come with an inherent set of responsibilities that the student must consider if he or she is to continue down that path.

Bowl tea and gongfu tea are like the Taiji (太極). Yin and Yang both occupy a well-defined space with clear boundaries that do not bleed into the other, yet a small circle of each resides in the other, and together they form a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Black contrasts with white and vice versa, just as the functions of gongfu tea and bowl tea contrast and define the other. If everything were black, there would be no black or white. One exists only in relation to the other. They are one and the same and yet completely different by their very nature, circling into each other while remaining perfectly distinct. The distinction is what makes them work. The reason bowl tea functions as it does is that it is held apart from gongfu tea, and the same is true for gongfu, which works best distinct from bowl tea.

This Hut encompasses more than one tea practice, each with a unique source and heritage. Bowl tea is old and rooted in meditation, ceremony and ritual. Gongfu tea is newer, relatively, and rooted in the mastery, skill and craftsmanship devoted to creating the best cup of tea possible. They are both aspects of the same art: one is an expression of the depths of that creativity, its source in the trees and Nature, and the other a virtuosic skill in honor of that spirit, refined to a level that uplifts the brewer and the drinker.

In the past, these traditions were isolated by geography. The modern age has made learning much more accessible. However, the increase in choices also brings challenges: it can be harder to decide what to practice and with whom, and it is also easy to get confused, jumbling things up, leaving things out or mixing things that will lead us astray. We are very fortunate that Wu De brought these two methods together in a way not possible in the past, linking the chains and founding the Hut. As it was in the past, it is also our generation's responsibility to uphold these ways, improve upon them, refine them and then hand them down. We must create and maintain space for each practice, cultivating understanding and respect for their roots, so that they may live together harmoniously and continue to grow and evolve, nourishing the tea lovers who pass through these and future halls. And that is the deeper reason why it is important to keep bowl tea and gongfu tea separate: They complement each other when approached with respect, honor and understanding, and we simply must trust in that from cup to cup and bowl to bowl.



TeaWayfarer

Each month, we introduce a Global Tea Hut member 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 Tea 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 practices. Through Tea make friends. This month, we would like to introduce Andjelka Jankovic.

I remember the first thing Tea said to me was: “Drink your tea and let the longing pour out.” Had I not been so “lost” in my longing, I would never have found the Way. I had a lifelong dream to live in New York City after watching *Home Alone 2* countless times as a child. Later in 2015, I was living in East Village and it was nothing like John Hughes had promised. I was adrift with no job, no family or community, and no prospects (I did try break-dancing, though). I then experienced heartbreak when a beautiful Italian man whom I met on a train to Colorado—and had a one-way plane ticket to see in Florence—told me he’d met someone else. Welcome to my Saturn Return.

Walking into a yoga class at Sky Ting in Chinatown, I saw a poster for a “tea ceremony.” The steam rising from the bowls looked so peaceful, the total opposite of how I felt. A week later I shared tea in silence with a room full of people—surrounded by the immense noise and loneliness of the city. I remember the vivid feeling in my bones: I don’t know what just happened, but I love this. The person serving tea was Baelyn Elspeth, and I found out she was a student of Wu De. I tracked down a copy of *The Way of Tea* which led me to this lineage.

From that moment, I looked for tea everywhere I went. In Japan, I traveled to a tea farm in Wazuka (an 800-year-old tea village and the largest matcha-producing region in the world) with only the loose directions of: “Follow the road between two forests past a shrine entrance.” In the Canadian Rockies, I hiked to two remote teahouses in the mountains, crossing frozen waterfalls and traversing up glacial trails to reach my version of Heaven: a cabin in the woods serving tea. “Synchronicitea” is very real in my life, and I will always cherish that.

I opened my first *Global Tea Hut* package in January 2020 at the intentional community I was living in. My first tea bowl was a shallow palo santo smudge bowl because that’s all I could find in New Mexico! I remember one magical day being snowed in and spending the whole afternoon in my room with music, writing, drinking Ruby Red and staring out my window at the white abyss. Unknowingly, I was making a lifelong friend. Forces beyond me landed me a last-minute spot at Wu De’s tea and meditation retreat at Esalen, California, in February 2020 (read the full story in the October 2020 issue). Tea finally arrived, just not according to my timing, and it is much better that way. It’s like what Elizabeth Gilbert says: “The truth is bigger than your plans.”

Nowadays, I live back in Australia by the ocean in Fremantle. My tea space is my sanctuary, where I tend to my in-



茶人: Andjelka Jankovic, Serbia/Australia

ner home. To echo David Whyte, “This is the temple of my adult aloneness and I belong to that aloneness as I belong to my life.” I serve tea to friends and strangers alike in a Sacred Sunday ceremony. Tea has deepened my solitude immensely. I usually read a passage from Rilke and pull a tarot card as a guide for the day. My favorite tea is during rain. When I need to make a decision, I think “I’ll tea on it” instead of “I’ll sleep on it.” I love making “tea mood” playlists and now listen to mostly instrumental music. I am slowly learning the art of flower arranging (*ikebana*). I’m having a go at *kintsugi* next (hands up if your cat has broken teaware too!). And an exciting part of being home is making new tea friends. I met the ever-wonderful Matthew and Odile, fellow Chajin in Perth, and we have shared tea in Nature many times.

Since my thousand Internet searches for tea, I’ve realized that belonging is a longing met. We were always going to meet. I have an unshakable faith in Tea and Tea has unshakable faith in me. She says: “We are together. This is all that matters. I’m glad you exist.”

There are so many of you that I look to, and I hope we can all meet one day! I’d love to share virtual tea with you or host you wherever I am in the world. Please reach out—the kettle is already boiling...

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Wood Firing

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶道

茶主题: Tea & Music

茶主题: Dancong Tea



Signups for the first level of our online gongfu course are open at: www.teahutcourses.com. Currently, the presale rate is \$288, but that will rise when the course is released in June. We have worked very hard on this course, including almost a year of study and preparation, countless hours filming and editing, and all the supplementary work required to finish this. We hope it inspires you to begin or deepen your gongfu tea practice. This issue and May 2019 will be great supplementary materials!



We are proud to announce that our Tea of the Month, Päränd, as well as a Buddha Palm that was also roasted by master Lu Li Zhen, are both up on the website for purchase.



We have some new gongfu teaware that is very exciting, including some sets that will make getting started much easier. Our tulip cups, for example, are perfect for experimentation.



We have a wonderful new brick of aged shou called Dragon Heart. It is a 1980s 7638 with a very nice storage, beautiful aged flavor and deep and long-lasting energy that is grounding, rooted and very deep and internal.



We have tentatively set some dates for the not-so-annual Zen & Tea Retreat at Casa Cuadrau: October 18–27. You can learn more about the retreat at their website. Wu De will be joined by his friend, Chinese doctor and Qigong teacher Dave Melladew. We are hoping there is more possibility for travel and open borders by then so that we can all gather once again in the stunning Spanish mountains for some great tea, meditation, hiking and Qigong. Many of us have been looking forward to this for years!

Center News



These past few months, we were offered some opportunities outside of Taiwan, including some roads that opened in Japan. We are going to “tea on it,” as Andjelka put it so beautifully in her TeaWayfarer article. What a huge effort it would be to move, and Taiwan is our home. Maybe we could branch out and have locations in Japan, for example, and keep our offices in Taiwan running. Building elsewhere and moving the whole Center would be a huge undertaking and would require an absolutely perfect reason for doing so, like the ideal property offered to us. We want to stay in the East, where Tea comes from.



We are still discussing what it would look like to open a teahouse in the States as well. Most likely this would happen on the West Coast somewhere. We love the idea of a permanent spot there where we could come for months at a time, teach courses, offer daily ceremonies and social activities, and also maybe provide cheaper and quicker shipping for US tea friends. If you have any ideas, opportunities or places you think would work well for us, please reach out. Would a Global Tea Hut teahouse be worth a trip to visit?

May Affirmation

I value my inner wisdom

Do I value experiential wisdom? Do I respect my own sensitivity and ability? I experiment and base my understanding on my own experience.



www.globalteahut.org

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

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