

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

September 2017

EXTENDED EDITION

YIXING TEAWARE





MORNING GLORY

It is time for our special Extended Edition of Global Tea Hut. We are excited to present one of the largest and most in-depth publications on Yixing history, lore and ceramic ware that has ever been published in the English language. And we will be sipping a very special Yixing tea as we learn and explore!

Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl

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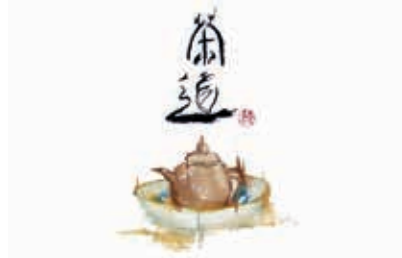
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無數財富在山上

幾世紀以來

晨榮耀

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From the Editor

In September, the weather finally cools down in Taiwan. Of course, cooler weather means outdoor tea, and there is nothing like drinking teas you love in the outdoors, surrounded by the Nature that made the tea. Drinking tea outdoors somehow lets more in, which those of you who have tried such sessions will know. This is one of the best months for tea lovers, as we turn towards Wuyi Cliff Tea, traditionally processed oolongs and aged oolongs, as well as some aged sheng puerh.

Of course, September has a very important holiday for Chinese people, as the traditional calendar is lunar and this is the largest moon of the year (*zhong qiu jie*, 中秋節). This was an important time for all our ancestors around the world: the Harvest Moon. In honor of *zhong qiu jie*, we started a tradition of offering an Extended Edition of the magazine every year as the gift. (If you are dumping your envelope up and down right now looking for the gift, this is it!) We started this tradition in 2014, with one of the largest publications on puerh tea ever published in English. Then, in 2015, we translated and annotated the *Tea Sutra* by the Tang Dynasty (618–907) tea sage Lu Yu. Last year, we published the largest English publication on Taiwanese oolong. (All of these marvelous resources are now up for free on the “Past Issues” section of our website.) And I think you get the idea now: we go full tea spirit on these September issues. This month is no different. You are holding one of the largest, most dense English publications on Yixing ever produced!

Some of you know that one of our long-term goals from the very beginning of this project was to start translating Chinese, and eventually, Japanese and Korean, tea texts from ancient and modern sources. We never intended for this magazine to be a mouthpiece for our tradition alone. The Center can serve as a place to house the teachings of our lineage. This magazine, on the other hand, has always been an attempt to create the best, deepest and most holistic source of tea information for all tea lovers. We aim to publish articles by many authors, from various perspectives and to cover tea in its entirety—from the geeky articles about tea biology, science and processing to history, travel and folklore, and, of course, what is so often missing from tea publications in English, the rich and deep spiritual practice and ceremonial use of tea that has a heritage of millennia of tea steeped, poured and adored as sacred work. In the beginning, we were limited by membership, which means budget, and could only afford the rare translation. As membership has grown, however, we have invested more and more in translation, and found amazing translators like Michelle Huang and Emily Foate, whose skills are a huge part of what has improved this magazine over the last year.

Through a deep, loving and wonderful relationship with the Liangs, father and son, spanning decades, we have been so fortunate to have been donated access to one of the largest, if not the largest, body of tea magazines and books to translate. Recently, we had some tea with another publisher,

who also has almost three decades of books and magazines, about donating their work to this project, and they wholeheartedly agreed. What's great is that their main focus these past decades has been on Yixing teaware—publishing countless books and the longest-standing magazine on ware from the Teapot City! This means that this issue contains rare, in-depth and never-before-translated articles on Yixing. Raise a bowl to Huang Chien Liang (黃健亮) and his wife, Huang Yi Jia (黃怡嘉), and Peng Qingfu for their generosity, as this relationship hasn't just made this one of the best issues of Global Tea Hut ever, but will continue to enrich this magazine in the years to come as well.


And to have a whole Extended Edition devoted to Yixing, we had to offer an Yixing red tea, drunk in every home and shop in the Teapot City. For that reason, I traveled to Yixing this July. With the help of my Yixing teacher, Master Zhou Qi Kun, I connected with an organic Yixing gongfu red tea farmer, Shao Shu Da (邵書大), to bring you an amazing treat to brew as you read and learn about the best teapots in the world. We hope that this issue inspires you to appreciate Yixing teaware more, to learn all about its history and production, and to come to the very important realization that the world of tea is vast and deep, incorporating several disciplines of mastery. There is a lot that goes into brewing a fine cup of tea, from the Nature that creates fine tea to the master craftsmen who process it, as well as the centuries of discipline and tradition behind each piece of teaware we love. This respect for all the devotion and love that goes into making tea and teaware—not to mention the traditions of tea brewing, which also extend millennia into the misty past of prehistory—hopefully helps you to fall in love with tea more and to strive to protect the environments that create the Leaf we all love so much!



–Further Readings–

This month, we recommend taking the time to read through the February 2015 issue of Global Tea Hut, which is all about Yixing and Masters Zhou and Chen. You may also want to check out the issue on gongfu red tea we made in June of this year for some background information. Both are in the “Past Issues” part of the website.

TEA OF THE MONTH

 ver the course of this month, we will be steeped to the heart and soul of Yixingware. The history of Yixing is so rich and vast that even an Extended Edition—the largest publication in English to date—even this will but scratch the surface of the many layers of ore buried below Yixing. We thought that if we were going to steep so many brews of a seasoned pot made of *zisha*, *hongni* and *duanni*, we'd best have an Yixing tea to put inside. Those of you who have been to Yixing know that in every shop, studio and small factory where Yixing pots are made, carved, decorated or fired, the locals drink their own bright red gongfu tea. This simple brew is musky and sweet and can be quite nice, but usually isn't very patient. Though it is lackluster sometimes, it is something wonderful, as it is so intermingled with all our memories of wonderful trips to Yixing and the friends we've made there over the years. Since Yixing craftspeople all welcome their guests with this tea, we knew it would have to be our Tea of the Month. We called our dear brother, Master Zhou, and told him we needed an organic Yixing gongfu red tea for this Extended Edition. Since we were headed to Yixing to take some pictures anyway, he said we could pick it up then, mentioning that we could even see the trees and photograph them if we wanted to. Before leaving, we thought we would be traveling to a simple plantation in the surrounding hills, like the ones we had seen while traveling through and

around Yixing, only this time organic. But we were more wrong than a kettle left on a stove without water: Even our wildest expectations couldn't have prepared us for what we experienced on this trip!

Master Zhou drove us into the mountains outside of Yixing, and we caught up with him on the drive, discussing what an amazing Extended Edition of Global Tea Hut this would be. The haze of the industrial city faded into clear blue skies as the asphalt gave way to bright green summer. We followed a road along a clear river, marveling at how clean and bright the waters were. The road wound right next to the river, entering the small village of Shao Wu (邵塢村). Master Zhou told us that there are around two hundred houses in the village and roughly a thousand people. He said that when he was young, there wasn't a road to this village, and if villagers wanted to get to the city, they would walk trails, or travel by donkey if they had things to carry. Though the simple, concrete-block road was new, the village appeared to have changed little in the decades since: simple houses, senior citizens lounging in the shade of a bridge, chatting and drinking tea, and everywhere the signs of simple farm living.

The mountains around Shao Wu Village are covered in bamboo, which we saw piled up outside of every home: large ten-meter pieces, leaves and branches, as well as the shavings of bamboo. We traveled to the end of the

village, parking next to a bright green lake and entered the last house in the long, narrow village, which follows the large river valley. All of us were wondering where the tea farms were, since there wasn't really any farmland visible. The houses were built in a neat row, hanging over the river, and each side was flanked by steep mountains and bamboo forests. The narrow valley had little room for anything other than a row or two of houses and the river itself.

We were greeted by the happy smile of Shao Shu Da (邵書大), who has lived his whole life in this village. He invited us in for tea. The house was simple, with a wood-fire stove for cooking and some rustic wooden furniture on an earthen floor. Mr. Shao used a large tin can with a handle to brew the tea, which he decanted into glasses for us. We had never seen such simple brewing, but it was made with a welcoming smile full of hospitality. The tea was brighter, cleaner and had a much deeper Qi than we were used to having on previous trips to Yixing. Noticing our smiles, Master Zhou said that the tea was special, as we would soon see, and that Mr. Shao had used fresh spring water from the mountains to brew it, adding a sweet flavor and mountain depth to the bright red liquor. As the two chatted in Yixingese, we drank cup after cup of the tea, prepared so simply in a metal can, yet filled with depth and all the hospitality of a genuine, simple and bright heart all aglow with Tea spirit.



Morning Glory



Yixing, Jiangsu, China



2017 Wild Gongfu Red Tea



Han Chinese



~600 Meters





It turns out that Mr. Shao, who is sixty-five years old, is actually Master Zhou's father's cousin, so Master Zhou calls him "uncle." After they chatted for a while and we contentedly drank the beautiful tea, Master Zhou helped us translate Mr. Shao's Yixingese into Chinese so we could talk, as he speaks little Mandarin and with a thick accent. He has been farming tea for fifty years, as his father also made red and green tea here. But "farming" may not be the right word, which was the surprise Master Zhou had been keeping something from us. It turns out the villagers here still to this day make more than ninety percent of their income from foraging in the mountains. The forests are primarily bamboo, which they use

to build furniture, construct buildings, make brooms out of the branches and leaves and sell dried bamboo shoots for food. Mr. Shao said that almost all the vegetables they eat are also foraged in the nearby hills. When we asked if we could see his tea farm, he laughed and gestured to the mountains all around, saying, "You are looking at it!"

All of the tea in this village is also foraged wild from the forests all around. They have no tea fields. Mr. Shao thinks that tea has been here since the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). He thinks that villagers had gardens back in the day, but that they spread wild into the hills, long before even his father was born. He said he never met his grandfather, but that his father told

him that when he had been a boy, they had also foraged wild tea. They forage enough to drink and share with guests, and when someone from the city orders some green or red tea from them, they also make some to earn some extra cash. Otherwise, they are foraging food or bamboo most days to make a living. Mr. Shao said that most people would rather buy tea from the plantations in the hills below, as wild tea isn't as sweet. We thought maybe the wild tea would be more expensive, as it is in most places in the world, and deter some buyers, but it turns out that their tea is cheaper than the inorganic plantation tea grown at lower altitudes. Mr. Shao said that the villagers' attitude was that the mountain provides



茶 The village of Shao Wu is a stunning oasis, set apart from the industrial area of Yixing by just a few minutes of driving, but an eternity of difference. After passing endless factories and cloudy air, we entered the green hills, where clear air and clean water flow down from the mountains. The people are kind and welcoming, humble and simple. We were invited in for some simple red tea, prepared in an old tin can and poured into simple glasses. And yet, the tea sparkled with the place and the fact that the same kind hearts that had harvested and processed the tea were now offering their labors freely as a gesture of hospitality. Mr. Shao was one of the highlights of our trip, and we hope he has become a lifelong friend. His tea spirit inspired us!



for them and the tea was all a free gift. They don't have to pay for the land, don't have any taxes or expenses, and this is reflected in the cheaper prices. As we drank tea and talked, we started to see this village in a new light. When we stepped outside to take a small walk, we did so with a great respect for these people and a life lived in harmony with Nature. They obviously weren't taking too much or polluting the environment, as the whole valley and surrounding mountains were thriving with life. We could hear the cicadas and birdsong even from inside Mr. Shao's house.

We chatted with Mr. Shao for a while about foraging (using Master Zhou as a translator). We asked him

about whether he felt resources were dwindling. He said that the forest was still abundant enough for the village, saying that the families here all lead simple lives and know what is enough. Mr. Shao only goes to the city once every two years, saying that the mountains provide everything he needs to live a happy, healthy life. When we asked about the harvest of tea, and if the villagers argued since the tea trees don't belong to anyone, he said that there are plenty of wild "gardens" to go around, and that they never over-harvest so the trees can grow strong and provide next year's tea as well. We all need to learn to harvest from Nature in a way that accounts for the future. Such plucking not only doesn't

harm the environment, it helps the tea trees, which grow and thrive from the pruning. Studies have shown that by harvesting only just enough of wild plants, aboriginal peoples benefit the plant populations they harvest from in reciprocity—often providing gaps in the plant colony that allow for new buds to thrive. Mr. Shao agreed, saying that the harvest of bamboo created a more abundant and healthy bamboo forest, like shaving a beard that grows back thicker as a result. Humanity does have a place and a role in Nature; we just need to work together in cooperation the way that other species do, taking and giving in a balance that creates healthy, thriving ecologies that sustain themselves.

THE HIKE TO GLORY

We walked just a bit into the forest, happy to be in the shade of the bamboo, which was a few degrees cooler. Mr. Shao said that when he was young there were tigers, bears and even the occasional panda in these forests, but that the villagers hadn't seen any in quite some time. We arranged a time to hike up into the mountains to see the tea the following morning and headed back into the village amongst a line of other villagers returning home with bamboo. We stopped at another house and were welcomed with the same open smiles and simple red tea in glasses. This is the kind of small place where everyone knows everything happening everywhere, so by now this house and the neighbors, who also stopped in, all knew that foreigners had come to their village, which was exciting for the children who wanted their picture taken with us.

The following morning we drove back to the village bright and early to beat the midday sun. Mr. Shao packed a knife into a wooden holster he wore on his back and led the way into the forest. This, he said, was to clear a path through the dense forest. It was to be that kind of hike! We walked along the river for a few minutes, and then turned up a crude staircase that looked like the bed of a river: loosely organized stones that resembled steps, with water flowing around them here and there. Mr. Shao said that when it rains heavily, this path does, in fact, become a river, but the stones were placed here by him, his son and some neighbors to make access to this part of the forest much easier. He said the stones make hiking easier and keep the path clear. We hiked up these steps for around two kilometers, growing more and more respectful of Mr. Shao with each step. Gathering this tea is hard work. Mr. Shao told us that the wives pick the tea and the men carry it down and process it, saying that "tea picked by women is better" in a tone that suggested this was something everyone knows. We couldn't imagine carrying forty to eighty kilograms of tea down this steep slope. It was hard work hiking up with a backpack full of a camera and some lenses!

After about an hour, including a couple of rest stops to drink some water, the stone path ended in forest. Up here, there were some trees growing sporadically around the bamboo, though the forest was entirely bamboo on the way up—bamboo, insects and birds. The slope was also much steeper here, so we had to use the bamboo to pull ourselves up, finding footholds that allowed us to grab the next one and pull. Before doing so, we said a small prayer of thanks to the bamboo, asking them to keep us safe and for permission to lean on them on the way up. After a few slow minutes of pulling ourselves up the steep slope one bamboo at a time, Mr. Shao stopped and looked around proudly and said, "We're here. This is one of the tea gardens we harvest."

It took a moment for our eyes to adjust to the shaded, thick forest, but then they started to glow in our hearts: tea trees! Scattered all around the bamboo, thickets and other trees were beautiful wild Camellias. They don't grow up very tall here because there is insufficient light. We realized that the sweetness in the tea Mr. Shao had served us the day before was in part due to this lack of sunlight, causing the trees to produce fewer tannins and less astringency. We disagreed with the city folk whom he said found the plantation tea grown below to be sweeter. The tallest tree was around a meter, but most were about half that. Despite their small size, they were all thriving;

green and bright, with thick trunks and no dead or dried up leaves. There were also many new, baby tea trees growing nearby. After saying some prayers, we asked to take some bigger leaves. We were here too late to harvest the buds in the tea we are sending you this month, but we wanted to process a little bit ourselves and didn't mind some bigger, thinner and more bitter leaves, as we were making the tea just for the experience. Mr. Shao said that the tea we are sending you was picked from this and other gardens in April, and had many more buds and small leaves inside. He said they usually pick a bud and three leaves each time.

Though there certainly were bug bites in the leaves of the tea trees, they weren't decimated, and there was a tremendous amount of insects all around us. We had all as much as bathed in essential oils before beginning our hike, and you could hear the cacophony all around you, whether you listened or not. This proves that insects really prefer eating other plants due to the bitterness of tea, and therefore won't destroy tea in a thriving and full ecology with biodiversity. Mr. Shao told us that our Tea of the Month has come from three or four such natural "gardens," which are really just clusters of a few hundred wild trees, and that the amount we ordered represents three or four days of picking and processing as well. This is amongst the most labor-intensive teas we've come across, and all tea production is hard work!

人與自然
茶道

天然非人工製造而成



向榮耀前進





茶 We arrived very late in the season, so we didn't get to see the Tea of the Month made; it was finished a few weeks before we got to Yixing. Mr. Shao did let us make some very rough, large-leaf tea, which we will be aging for leaves in a bowl tea. Morning Glory is processed very simply: The tea is foraged from the forest when the wild trees are budding. Mr. Shao is in the forest every day gathering bamboo, allowing him to monitor the wild tea trees. The tea is then withered outdoors and indoors, rolled for a long time (the only machine used is a rolling machine), oxidized/piled for a few hours and then finally sun-dried, which also lends the tea a unique flavor.



It was exhilarating to spend the morning in such glorious surroundings, with clean air, beautiful bamboo, Nature all around, and, of course, to see wild tea thriving in an unexpected way. From the city below, you would never expect to find the surrounding mountains so full of wild tea, let alone be foraging wild tea here a day after you arrived. All of us were beaming! This is how tea should be grown everywhere—pure, natural, living tea. This tea is naturally seed-propagated. Seeds are carried by mice and buried, some of which don't survive the winter and, therefore, don't ever eat them, allowing them to sprout. The trees don't grow tall, due to limited sunlight, but have plenty of room. More importantly, they have deep roots, which Mr. Shao said extend down several meters. These leaves are born from the womb of this rich environment, full of nutrients and life—insects, animals and birds, clear, clean water and deep quiet. And maybe it is just the suggestion of having spent the day in the forest, but we swear we can taste the bamboo in this tea in every sip. Can you?

Mr. Shao was proud, and brought out some melons from his pack to share, which cooled us all off for the hike back down. We looked around and this month's tea felt like it was destined to be named "Morning Glory." After our refreshing melons, we finished picking a small bag of tea leaves while Mr. Shao cleared some parasitic vines from some of the tea trees with care and found some fallen bamboo to make us hiking sticks for the way down. After a few meters, we realized that we never would have made it back down without these sticks, using one hand on the stick, taking a step and then grabbing a bamboo with the other hand. We went back down to the stone steps sideways so as not to slip and fall down; it was that steep! Believe us, there is a lot of hard work in this month's tea. Fill your cups with respect for the farmers who foraged these mountains.

Simple Tea

After the long hike down, and a few minutes to rest our sore legs, Mr. Shao showed us the simple processing of this tea, which is like dian hong.

First, the tea is withered outdoors, for around an hour, depending on the sun (*shai qing*, 曬青). This is to evaporate moisture in the leaves, making them limp for processing. When they are plucked, they are too brittle to work with. Also, this process begins the oxidation in the leaves. Then, the tea comes inside for rolling. Mr. Shao said that since we were only making a small amount of tea, we would roll it by hand, but that their "bigger batches," like the tea you will be drinking this month, were rolled by machine, uncovering his small rolling machine, which had been tucked in the corner of his house this whole time. The tea is rolled for around two hours, which is longer than some red tea. We think this is probably because the tea leaves are thicker and stronger, since the trees are wild, with deeper, stronger roots. Red tea is rolled to more fully break down the cells and oxidize the tea. After rolling, the tea is oxidized in piles, wrapped up in cloth for four to seven hours, depending on the leaves. Finally, the tea is sun-dried, which also influences the flavor.

The processing of this month's tea is as simple as the mountains it grows in and the lives of the people who forage it. Overall, Mr. Shao and his wife make less than fifty kilograms of tea a year, and we can understand why. The hike up and down the mountain was tiring, and we hardly picked any tea and weren't carrying much other than a camera and some lenses. Mr. Shao told us that around thirty-five kilograms are for some extra income and the rest they keep to drink all throughout the year, saying that in Shao Wu village, you have to have lots of tea on hand, as your neighbors may come over at any time, and it is customary to offer them some tea when they drop by for a chat, usually in the evening after a hard day's work harvesting bamboo and crafting it into goods, or foraging wild vegetables for dinner.

When we told Mr. Shao about Global Tea Hut, he couldn't believe it. He kept repeating the names of some of the countries his tea would travel to, beaming with pride. Master Zhou said that the villagers would be talking about our visit for weeks, and that Mr. Shao would have boasting rights amongst them, though we think he is much too humble to brag.

Technically, red tea from Yixing is a "gongfu red tea," like we discussed in the June issue of this year. This means that it is made from a varietal traditionally used to make green tea, and the selection process is more stringent than with most red teas. Usually, the first flush of buds is reserved for green tea, and later leaves are then made into red tea, like in Huangshan. But gongfu red tea is made of the first flush buds, and often processed with more care and added steps, since the raw material is a higher grade. This typically results in a bright red or golden liquor that is more sweet and musky than most red teas. Though all Yixing red tea is customarily called "gongfu red tea," and is indeed made from green tea varietals, often all-bud or leaf-and-bud sets, and processed with more steps and care, we aren't sure that the tea from Shao Wu Village really fits so neatly into the "gongfu red tea" category. Though it is a varietal that was probably originally planted in these hills to make green tea, it has grown wild for at least a hundred years. The seed-propagation has meant evolution and mutation. Every tree is unique, though they are all squat, dense medium-leaf trees that grow wider than tall, due to the lack of sunlight on the forest floor. And Mr. Shao's processing is the paragon of simplicity, reminding us of the aboriginals in Yunnan who have been making humble dian hong in this way for centuries.

In the end, the hike up a manmade riverbed of stones to a steep slope that we used bamboo to pull ourselves up to a ridge filled with thickets, bamboo, trees and tea, surrounded by birds and insects, running water and wind—all these left us comfortable with the fact that this wild tea defies our mind-made categories. And the hike back down, followed by the rustic and simple processing of the leaves, which were then literally brewed in a large tin cup, put the exclamation point on the "wild!" After such a glorious morning, we were left inspired. This is how tea was produced for centuries, and we hope that the inspiration we felt and the gratitude we shared with Mr. Shao will help promote such tea production elsewhere. There is hope that we can find our place in this world, working for and with Nature, as opposed to against Her!

茶 Morning Glory

晨榮耀

There is hope, tea family! If you can find wild, foraged tea production just forty minutes outside the industrial, factory-covered outskirts of Yixing, then there's a possibility that such tea is thriving in other remote areas as well. Sometimes it is easy to lose faith in humanity, with all the environmental problems we face, from polluted air to undrinkable water. But then you visit a village like Shao Wu, where people haven't changed their lifeways much in centuries, still surviving by foraging their livelihood from the mountains, and without damaging the environment.

Morning Glory is a testament of a cooperative, harmonious life of people and mountain working together. Seeing pristine mountains here and the simple life a forager left us with a deep respect for Mr. Shao and this tea. Wild tea trees with deep roots, drinking only mineral-rich mountain water and eating natural fertilizers, are always brimming with life. You can feel this if you close your eyes in these densely-forested mountains: the vibration of the cicadas and other insects humming a drone, which resounds just below the rhythm of the water and wind, as well as the piping melodies of the creaking, whooshing bamboo.

The Qi of this tea is bursting, and the lack of sunlight means the leaves are sweeter than the average red tea. Since the hike up the mountain is so rigorous, Mr. Shao and his wife pick more than just buds, though, bringing home a bud and three leaves more often. These older leaves add some strength and bitterness to the liquor as well, meaning it isn't as refined as most "gongfu red tea." But what it lacks in refinement, it makes up for in vitality. The bright red liquor is vibrant, musky and very patient, especially for an Yixing red tea, which are usually spent in just a few steepings. This tea doesn't fit in the gongfu tea category, as the selection and processing are too simple, but it is amongst the most ecologically sound, environmentally friendly living teas we have ever encountered. To find wild-foraged tea made with such hard work and care, with more of an attitude of love for forest than a commercial desire to get ahead, fills this tea with amazing life and depth.

Morning Glory is as bold and brisk as the long hike we took that morning to see the trees. There is a lot of Qi in it, which we find to be invigorating, making it a good tea to drink in the morning. The sun-drying means the tea is crisp and slightly toasty in flavor, and increases the radiance you feel in your chest after a few cups. If you hang on to the later steepings, you will be rewarded with a mineral-rich golden brew that tastes of crystals, rocks and streams, and though the tea loses its musky sweetness as it transforms from bright red to orange to gold, these latter steepings are beautifully smooth and soft.

As we mentioned earlier, we can now taste the bamboo in every sip, especially the early cups. The tea tastes almost like a Liu An that has been wrapped and stored in a bamboo basket, but we can't be sure if this is just the impression left from hiking in that bamboo forest. Please let us know if you can taste the bamboo on the app!



Gongfu

Sidehandle

Water: spring water or best bottled
Fire: coals, infrared or gas
Heat: hotter, fish-eye, roughly 90–95 °C
Brewing Methods: gongfu or sidehandle (gongfu is better)
Steeping: longer, no flash, then growing (red tea is nicer in a larger pot)
Patience: ten to fifteen steepings

茶 Use an Yixing with very thick walls to preserve heat throughout the longer steepings that this tea needs. This will result in smoother, less astringent, sweeter red liquor.

Brewing Tips

Since this month is all about Yixing teapots, and we're drinking an Yixing "gongfu red tea," we want to suggest that there is no better time to start a gongfu practice than now. If you don't feel ready or aren't prepared to start brewing tea gongfu, this tea can be brewed in a sidehandle and will make quite a nice bowl. It also responds well to being brewed in a large pot, Western style, with long steeping times, as casual kitchen tea (perhaps over a long chat about Yixing history and lore). If you need a pot, you may want to check our website to see if any of our Light Meets Life fundraiser pots are still available.

Gongfu brewing is an art form. "Gongfu" literally means "mastery through self-discipline," in fact. Like any art, mastery is achieved through the heart, not the mind. The mind gets in the way. You have to learn to feel each of the steps and learn them by touch. At some point in the future, we will devote a whole issue to gongfu brewing in our tradition, but for now, we thought we would offer a beginner's list of the basic steps for those of you just getting started. You will need an Yixing pot, cups, a kettle, a waste-water container (jian shui, 建水) and a teaboat (cha chuan, 茶船). There are infinite subtleties to learn as you travel, but

here are the steps reduced to a very basic formula (don't get stuck on this as some kind of "how-to," though):

Place the cups in front of the teaboat, with the pot inside and the jian shui on the side of the off-hand, which is also where the kettle should be. Rinse the cups and teapot with hot water, and then add the leaves. Then, rinse off the leaves as well, pouring the rinse water into the jian shui. Shower the pot around the body, not the lid, so it isn't too hot to grab. Then lift the lid and place water in the pot, moving in circles until the water is above the leaves, so as not to scald any one leaf. Leave some space in the pot. Then replace the lid and give the pot a good shower with hot water, this time covering everything. Fill the cups to pre-warm them, swishing the hot water and quickly pouring it into the jian shui. After the tea has steeped, scrape the pot on the side of the teaboat to remove any water, and pour in circles around the edges of the cups so you don't make any bubbles. Empty the teaboat and replace the pot, before handing the cups out to your guests. These basic steps are then repeated for each steeping. Practice and refinement, discipline and learning will help you master this process over time, like all aspects of gongfu tea brewing.



YIXING

宜興



茶具

TEAWARE



BEGIN WITH HONOR

Before we get our hands into some Yixing clay, exploring *Zisha* throughout this issue, we must show our respect, honoring our master. So much of what you will read and learn in this special, ultra-edition of Global Tea Hut is directly due to the profound and deep knowledge and wisdom of our Yixing Master, Zhou Qi Kun (周其坤). Not only is he an extremely talented teapot maker himself, but he is also a mine of Yixing knowledge, as deep as the ones they dug in Yellow Dragon Mountain to find the precious ore. He is also kind and hospitable, and extremely generous with his knowledge. Master Zhou has always shown us patience, taking the time to show us around Yixing, to meet many of its craftsmen and to see firsthand how the ore is made into clay, to interview miners, to see the ore being processed, the firing, molds, carving, decorating, painting, rare glazing—you name it, and Master Zhou has wisdom to share, as he whisks you off with enthusiasm so you can see for yourself. With hearts full of gratitude, we lay all the merits of this project, and this entire issue, at his feet. May he make a thousand, thousand more pots, each better than the last!

Only when a teapot is created by the hands of one who brews tea with love and devotion will it inspire such

love in the Chajin who takes it home. The one who brews tea every day, and not out of habit or lifestyle, but rather out of passion—such a one will make pots that other tea lovers will want to use. When you combine skill with soul, you get mastery. This is true of every art. When a song, poem or painting comes out of the heart and soul—or even better, the Stillness beyond—it encourages a movement towards that same place in the witness. When you love Tea and devote yourself to it, you will understand not only the spirit that informs Tea, but also all of the functional nuances that will make beginners and masters appreciate your craft all the more.

Master Zhou was born in 1963, in Zhao Zhuang Village, Yixing. He was a smart and precocious boy, who was interested in all things. Tea and teapots were a part of everyone's life here, and it's hard to find anyone in the area, even today, whose life hasn't been influenced by teaware. Master Zhou's wife is named Chen Ju Fang (陳菊芳). She was born one year later, in 1964. They were classmates growing up, and when you ask them about growing up together and eventually falling in love, they both smile in a very sweet way. Though they say that it wasn't until they were much older that they noticed each other in a romantic way,

you get the sense that there is a strong destiny flowing throughout their story—weaving through the present time as well. It's in the way they effortlessly get along, as if support and strength were second nature.

After being a carpenter for some years, Master Zhou made the decision to begin making teapots. He went to school, studying the history and lore of Yixingware as well as the chemistry and science of pottery. He was an apprentice to Yang Qing Fang, who is one of the ten grandmasters of Yixing, and eventually became his top student. In fact, it was through Master Yang that Masters Lin and Zhou met.

We could write another few articles about Master Zhou's accolades—which awards he's won and where (and how he has won them), his press, etc.—but that would betray everything that he is as a man and as a master. Though he knows more about Yixing lore and craft than anyone we've ever met, he is humble and will listen to every insight offered, even from foreign friends. He is modest about his work, as well. He has a very strict and disciplined nature, and demands much of himself as a person and as an artist. You'll know more about him if we tell you about his approach to teaware, as opposed to listing his tributes. He is a true master, in other words.



Master Zhou loves tea and he loves teapots! That can't be overstated. Even in ancient times, it was rare for someone to know so much about the entire process of Yixing production, from ore to fired pot. Most of the workers specialize in their own niche: from making molds to mining ore, refining clay to making pots. Others sell pots and understand them from a collector's viewpoint, studying the history and authenticity of antiques, for example. Master Zhou hasn't just dabbled in all these fields, he understands them in great detail. As we traveled around to ore collectors, clay refiners, mold makers, teapot makers and vendors, and both gas and wood-fired kilns, we realized that most all the masters in these fields were enthusiastic to learn from Master Zhou, often listening as raptly as we were.

We are also always mystified by how easily Master Zhou navigates the scientific, experiential, aesthetic and even spiritual aspects of Tea. He can discuss the energy of the kiln, and then, with the same bright smile, move on to discuss all the chemical reactions happening at any given time, rattling off compounds as he does so. All told, we hope you get a sense for him as a master and a person, because both are worth knowing. His love for Yixingware is very contagious.

He has studied Qing and Ming pots for over twenty years, making him the perfect candidate for researching the effects of clay on tea with Master Lin. Of course, as a gongfu master and collector of many decades, Master Lin has access to many antique pots that aren't around in Yixing. He also has an unparalleled sensitivity to Tea and a mastery of tea brewing. His knowledge of tea lore in general is beyond belief, spanning languages and regions. The two of them were obviously born to do great work together. And they have. They have worked hard to create some of the best modern pots in the world, and not just in elegance and craft, but also in a refinement of clay and design that makes a finer cup of tea.

Masters Zhou and Chen Ju Fang, Master Zhou's wife, are both members of the Chinese Industrial Art Society and Jiangsu Province Zisha Ceramics Arts and Crafts Society, where they participate in meetings and research. Master Zhou continues to hone his craft and innovate new pots that satisfy his artistic bent, while, at the same time, researching improvements in ore/clay production, teapot making and firing, in terms of tea brewing.

Master Zhou has mastered the art of inlaying gold onto pots like a starry sky, and is considered the best in that design. His starred pots are so refined.

The grace and movement of the gold highlights all the subtle elegance of a traditional teapot shape, and each speck of light seems to shine from its own space. They also are all perfectly equidistant from each other, which reminds us of Indra's net—in which every jewel, at every joint, contains a reflection of all the rest.

We feel honored to share a bit about Master Zhou Qi Kun with all of you. He has been one of the great teachers of our lives. We've always had a passion for Purple-Sand teaware, and have learned tons from the amazing pots we brew with—everything from better gongfu to spiritual lessons. And there isn't any aspect of what we know about Yixing pots that hasn't been refined by Master Zhou. It's hard to write an article like this, about someone you consider a brother. Master Zhou is not a story or an article to us. He is our friend. And speaking from the heart, he is also family.

Chen Ju Fang is another of our teachers. She is a master of Yixingware in her own right. She now works at the pottery studio "Wu Xing Shan Fang (五行山坊)." She specializes in making strong and sturdy *Guang Hu* (光壺, Light Pots) and *Zhu Hu* (竹壺, Bamboo Pots). You will hear both these masters' names in the coming pages, as they are in our hearts...

An Introduction to Yixingware

宜興壺介紹

They say that an immortal was wandering the mountain currents, flying from the southern peaks of Wuyi to the distant north, when he saw a simple village full of goodness and selfless kindness. Stopping to watch, he saw that the people were altruistic and genuinely loved kindness. He decided to change their fortune for the better. He appeared the next day in the village square, dressed as a traveling monk. He called out to passersby, “Free life-changing wisdom!” But no one stopped to find out what he meant, feeling content with their lives as they were. He still had a desire to offer a path that could result in their cultivation, mastery and awakening, so he tried a different tack the next day, instead calling out, “Freedom and bliss!” But once again, the concepts were too vague for the simple villagers, who now began to discuss the eccentric monk and his strange cries, not knowing if he was a saint or a madman. That night, the immortal rested in deep meditation. He realized that these villagers would need a simpler, more practical and earthly path to mastery and immortality. They would need an art that would mold and craft their lives, with room for infinite refinement. He spoke with the mountains and the wind about the good people. The wind had naught to offer, busy moving the seeds for the trees.

But the mountain was also grateful to the villagers, who were as kind to the earth as they were to each other. The mountain told the immortal of a precious ore buried deep within, which, once it was mined, could be used to form anything the mind could imagine, and therefore, more precious than the brightest of gems. He had found the answer, for what better gift than the freedom of creativity, endless imagination, mastery of a craft and livelihood for all the generations of the villagers to come? The next morning, the immortal again entered the square, this time with cries of “Untold riches!” And this, of course, brought everyone in the village to the square—every house emptied. They followed the old immortal to the nearby mountain, where he had dug a hole. He went inside and came back with the gorgeous ore, explaining how to mine it and form it into clay, which could then make anything at all, bringing great fame, wealth and abundance to their village now and forever. The people were enthralled and ready to begin right away. At that point, the immortal changed into his true form, a bright yellow dragon, and flew off to the north. From that day till now, those people and their descendants have been busy honing that precious ore into pots, and that place still bears the name “Yellow Dragon Mountain (黃龍山).”

There is no ceramic art in the world quite like Yixing purple-sand teapots, for they aren't just pieces of art meant to sit on the shelf and be admired. The beauty of tea art is only expressed properly as a living art. The pots want to be used. They develop a soft, silky sheen over time the more they find themselves in the company of good leaves and water—becoming more and more beautiful as they are used.

Note: “*Zisha* (紫砂)” or “Purple-Sand” clay, which, as we will discuss later, is confusingly both a category of clay, synonymous with “*zini* (紫泥)” or “purple clay,” and *Zisha* also refers to all Yixing ore/clay. We have decided to use a capital “Z,” “*Zisha*” when referring to the latter and small “z,” “*zisha*” when talking about the purple clay. (The same goes for English: small p/s, “purple-sand,” for *zini* clay, and capital P/S, “Purple-Sand,” for all kinds of *Zisha*.)

Zisha (capital “Z”) is composed of quartz remains, isinglass, kaolinite, mica, hematite, iron and several other trace elements. It is fired at a temperature of around 1000–1250 degrees Celsius, but the quartz and isinglass remain, creating what potters call a “double pore structure,” which ultimately was the ring that sealed its marriage to Tea. Because of that, the oils in the tea are absorbed into the teapot itself, and over time, the pot gets “seasoned.”





In other words, it absorbs the fragrance and depth of all the teas it has met in its time. Also, the composite structure of Yixing clay makes it resilient to radical temperature changes, so that teapots can be covered with boiling water even in the cold of winter; and what could be a more elegant image than snow-covered mountains in the distance seen over a steaming Yixing pot?

This capillary action means that *zisha* teapots also preserve heat to an extraordinary degree, which is a huge factor in traditional gongfu tea. If the temperature stays consistent and our movements are slow and graceful, then the essence of the tea unfurls slowly, with little change in the liquor from steeping to steeping. This means our tea will ultimately be more “patient,” or last for more steepings. The session will also be smoother and more lasting. In fact, making tea smoother is why *zi-*

sha teapots have been married to Tea for five hundred years.

As we learned in the April Classics of Tea issue this year, the first Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) emperor, Ming Taizu (明太祖), outlawed powdered cake tea, as he was a farmer’s son and a monk before ascending to the throne, and valued frugality and simplicity in all things. He felt that the powdered cake tea popular at the time was a waste of energy and capital, as it required so much more work to produce and for a lower yield. Due to his influence, tea lovers throughout the aristocracy started steeping loose-leaf tea, just as simpler people did.

The various kilns throughout China then started producing teaware to suit this style of brewing: large pots and cups, mostly. It was during this time that the Western world developed an interest in tea, and this style of brewing

(fewer leaves, steeped for a long time in a large pot) has been preserved in the West and in restaurants around the world. Very quickly, tea lovers throughout China all started using Yixing *zisha* pots. In those days, “kilns” were whole villages. Firing with wood was expensive, so no potter fired alone. This practice still continues in many homes in Yixing today, as potters continue to take their works to communal kilns. As a result, the whole town was called a “kiln.” And most of the kilns tried their hand at teaware for steeping tea, but it was Yixing that became the “Teapot City,” with every man, woman and child involved in some aspect of teapot production. Many disciplines, each with its own mastery, went into making these teapots: ore selections, miners, clay processors, potters, kiln masters and merchants. Even today, every pot we hold, appreciate and use



茶 *Yixing ore is mined and then left out to weather for a minimum of three years (the longer, the better). It breaks down, becoming crumbly and more and more like sand. At that point, the ore is ground into powder and sieved. It is then purified through soaking in water and pounded into clay. The clay is then aged as well (again, the longer, the better). Master Zhou uses forty-year-old clay. Above are sample pieces of all the possible blends for sale at a clay merchant in Yixing. All the bright blues, greens and yellows are not from natural ore. They have added other ingredients, which is not ideal for tea.*

to brew our tea is the product of many people's labor, spanning years of work and centuries of mastery—from miners to clay producers to teapot makers!

Over the years, the art of Yixing would evolve, incorporating all the other art forms in the Middle Kingdom. Since most artists, of any kind, were also tea lovers, pots soon had calligraphy, painting, seal-carving and even poetry on their sides as ornamentation. Some of the most sought-after teapots were ones made by famous potters and artists together, one creating the pot and the other painting it or carving the calligraphy. Yixing influenced and was influenced by all art.

Eventually, two main styles would develop based on the differences in the tea art of the North and South. In the northern cities, near the capital, officials wanted larger pots to serve many guests, with a lot of ornamentation to

show off their power and affluence. In the South, commoners preferred simple, small pots to make tea for themselves and their friends.

Much like the aged and wise tea leaves, Yixing pots have a kind of consciousness and even destiny. They seem to have a bond with their owners. Walking into a store full of teapots, five separate tea lovers will be drawn to five separate pots, without being able to explain why. These pots then become like dear friends, traveling with us over time. There are times when we enter the Center's tea room undecided about which tea to drink, and find ourselves choosing not based on which leaf we think suits the day, but which teapot we wish to hold. Do you love your pots as much as we do? Do you find great poetry in them? Do you feel a bond when you pour? A simple Yixing pot resting on a small plate is an image

that, for us, carries all the peace and bliss of the tea ceremony with it.

But why did this simple, unadorned, earthen-colored pot take over the tea world? Of course the simple aesthetic of Yixingware appeals to a certain kind of Chajin, then and now, but many people are attracted to more glamorous aesthetics, like the gorgeous painted porcelain of Jingdezhen, which can also be made into teapots. Such pots are much more desirable to mainstream tea drinkers, so why did every tea lover start using Yixingware? Why did Yixing become the "Teapot City"? And why is there a five-hundred-year-old sign above the entrance to the old city that reads: "There is only one ceramic teapot in the world and Her name is Yixing"? We hope that this glorious issue will help you understand, and more importantly, feel into the answers why!



Three kinds of genuine duanni



Genuine Heini



Muo Luni

A big part of what makes Yixing teaware so special is the clay itself. The Chinese were master potters long before many Western peoples, having developed stoneware and porcelain many centuries earlier. Because the clay is naturally lead-free, it can be used for food and drink even after the initial firing, without the need for a glaze. Without glaze, the clay remains porous and sand-like.

Yixing clay comes from ore, mined from strata deep within the earth. The mines were dug more than hundreds of meters, with the majority of clay coming from between forty and seventy-five meters below sea level. Some of the retired miners we have spoken with reported that a minimum of five miners died every year while extracting Yixing ore!

After the clay is mined, it looks like a block of stone, with a flaky consistency. It is then allowed to rest in the air for years, called “corrosion,” as it breaks down into small, soybean-sized pebbles. These small chunks are then

ground into sand and allowed to “ferment” in water for a period. The duration depends on the ore and the master overseeing the process, though most of the old masters I’ve met seemed to have a “the longer, the better” philosophy when it comes to airing/storing the ore. More water and sifting produces smoother clay, whereas leaving more sand creates textured clay that is often more porous when fired. Sifters of various sizes are used to create these different textures. Then, after the clay is slabbed, it is pounded with a large wooden mallet, sometimes blending colors in this way, until the putty is of the desired color and consistency.

Colors of the Rainbow

Understanding the ore/clay from Yixing can be a bit confusing, but we will introduce the basics to you here. Confusingly, all clay from Yixing is called “Zisha (紫砂),” which literally means “Purple-Sand.” Traditionally,

Zisha was known as “Five Color Earth (五色土),” as it could be fired to purple, red, green, yellow or black. The variety of colors in Yixingware relate to three main factors: where in the strata the ore was mined and what kind of ore it is, the firing temperature and whether or not additives were used to change the color.

Each ore has its own color after firing (we will show you some ores on the following pages). As we mentioned, ore/clay was traditionally categorized as purple (*zini*, 紫泥), red (*hongni*, 紅泥), green (*luni*, 綠泥), black (*heini*, 黑泥 or *wuni*, 烏泥) or gray/yellow (*huangni*, 黃泥 or *duanni*, 段泥). Back in the day, there were ores for all five colors, but nowadays, authentic ore is rare and most colors are produced with additives. Genuine green (*benshan luni*, 本山綠泥), which means “Green Clay From the Original Mountain”) and black ore/clay are almost nonexistent. Nowadays, green and blue colors are achieved with additives and black by firing in ash.



Three kinds of genuine zisha/zini



Two kinds of hongni: one genuine (left) & one with iron-oxide

More simply, there are three families of Yixing clay: *zisha/zini*, or purple-sand, *hongni*, which are reddish clays, and *duanni*, which are grayish-yellow. Each of these large families has a huge array of clays within it. In this simpler categorization, green clay can be in the *duanni* category and black clay in the *zisha* category, or simply dropped, since both are so rare in their natural form. There are many different ways of organizing the clays of Yixing. Some authors and/or craftsmen organize them by the location the ore was mined. The best ores were found in Yellow Dragon Mountain (黃龍山) or Blue-Green Dragon Mountain (青龍山), which were closed in the late 1990s; other regions of Yixing, like Fu Dong (浹東), continue to mine ore. Aside from the location, the strata that the ore was taken from is another way that the clay is organized. When clay is purely one ore and not blended, it is called “*Qing Shui Ni* (清水泥).” One famous stratum is called “*Di Cao Qing* (底槽青).” Though this is amongst

the most valuable ores, this doesn't mean it is always best for craftsmen or for tea. Even within a single vein, the purity of any ore can vary a lot. There are so many kinds of ore, from bright red *zhuni* (朱泥) to “sesame *duanni*” (*zhi ma duanni*, 芝麻段泥), which has dark sesame-seed-like sand grains in it. This all gets even more confusing when you include the mastery of blending (*pin pei*, 拼配). Masters of old were very skilled at blending clays for aesthetics and for the effects each blend had on all tea, or even on a specific genre of tea!

The second aspect of Yixingware color is firing. Firing temperature also affects color a lot. Within each of the three or five families of clay, depending on how you divide *Zisha* ore/clay, each and every kind of ore can be fired to three to five main colors, with infinite subtle shades between. *Zini* ores/clays can be light reddish-brown to deep, dark purple, for example; and *duanni* can be creamy white to dark grayish-yellow.

Finally, since most clay comes from outside the traditional mines, potters have started adding powders to change the color. This practice actually began in the Republic Era (1911–1949), because these clays are brighter and more beautiful in some people's opinions. Due to the hazardous nature of these materials, the amount was restricted by law to 0.5%. They mix copper-oxide to make artificial *duanni*; cobalt-oxide makes bright blue; chrome-oxide creates bright green (called “*Muo Luni*, 墨綠泥”); mixing manganese-oxide makes “*Hei Xing Ni* (黑星泥)” or “Black-Star Clay,” *Qing Hui Ni* (青灰泥), which is green-gray clay, or *heini*, which is black clay; and finally, mixing iron-oxide creates redness.

On the following pages, we have some famous ores. They are categorized more simply as zisha/zini, hongni and duanni. They are full of life. These ores were waiting in the Earth for millions to hundreds of millions of years to become teapots!



Hong Ma Tze (紅麻子)



Yellow Dragon Mt. Duanni (黃龍山段泥)



Hong Pi Long (紅皮龍)



Old Hongni (老紅泥)



White Clay Ore (白泥)



Ling Jia Chun Duanni (林家村段泥)



Fu Dong Zisha (涑東紫泥)



New (Unaged) Zisha (新紫泥)

■ Zisha (紫砂)

■ Hongni (紅泥)

■ Duanni (段泥)



Zhuni (朱泥)



Huang Ma Tze (黃麻子)



Shi Hong (石紅)



Jiang Po Ni (降坡泥)



Shi Huang (石黃)



Mian Tou Ni (面頭泥)



Old (Aged) Zisha (老紫泥)



Di Cao Qing (底槽青)



GONG CHUN



THE LEGEND OF WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

During the reign of the great emperor Ming Zheng De, there was an official in Nanjing named Huang. Huang was a kind and gentle soul. He loved his family, the arts and especially tea. His friends often gathered in the nearby hills to drink tea, compose poems, and more often, listen to the Qin. Huang was an amateur painter, better at calligraphy, but, as all his friends said, the most skilled at brewing tea of all their acquaintances. Not only did he command a vast knowledge of tea, tea history, processing and lore, but he also had a very sensitive palate. Huang was able to tell which tea they were drinking, what quality it was and sometimes even which spring water was being used. But old Huang was a simple, happy man who enjoyed the peace and prosperity of the Ming Empire, never boasting of any expertise or offering his opinion in any but the humblest way. He was a true Chajin, in other words.

Huang had a manservant, who had lived in his service since he was a young man, named Chun. The two had grown up together, more friends than servant and master. In fact, Chun's father had also served Huang's father. And it wasn't in the nature of either to be jealous, so they were, in fact, much like brothers. Huang treated Chun like

family, and as a result, Chun would have done anything for his master, treating his service as a sacred duty.

Every two months, Huang would travel on routine surveys as part of his job as a commissioner. He would, of course, take his manservant with him. But whenever they traveled to Yixing in Jiangsu, Huang would stay with his mistress, so Chun was free to have a holiday there. Chun was a devout Buddhist, and so loved using the three or four days of free time to sit in meditation retreats at the local Golden Sand Monastery (*Jin Sha Si*, 金沙寺). The monks there appreciated his earnest devotion to practice and so loved having him every couple of months. Over time, the abbot of Golden Sand Temple would become Chun's preceptor, further establishing his connection to that Zen lineage.

During his retreats, the monks would often prepare tea for him. Though he didn't have access to as much tea as his master, Huang, or know as much about it, Chun honestly loved tea. His master's joy for the Leaf had rubbed off on him, and the two of them had shared hundreds of sessions at home in Nanjing. He was thrilled that tea was a part of the daily practice of the monks at Golden Sand, as it was in most monasteries throughout the kingdom in those days. But some-

how the monk's tea was better than any he'd ever had—brighter, smoother and deeper. It was as if each cup went deeper into his soul, stirring the winds inside and bringing new fervor to his meditation practice. Chun just assumed it was the mindfulness and attention to detail of the monks, along with his heightened sensitivity during these retreats, that made the tea better.

On one visit, Chun was walking through the temple grounds and saw into a small workshop, where some monks were crafting something. He looked inside and saw that they were making simple, rustic teapots by hand. He watched, awestruck by the process. He asked if he could touch the clay, which they allowed, but said that he would have to ask permission from the abbot for them to teach him their tradition of teapot making. The moment Chun's hands touching the thick brown clay, his heart leapt. He loved it more than anything he had ever loved before. The clay spoke to him, unlocking visions of glorious teapots to come. He saw deep and vast halls of glory and joy spread to the horizon. Tea and teapots filled his world. He felt a deep and powerful connection to the whole process. His destiny bell had been rung, and so loudly that he couldn't sleep that night—up dreaming of the magnificently brownish-purple clay.





The next day he asked to see the abbot for permission to learn teapot craftsmanship from the monks. However, at that time, he hadn't yet taken precepts and the abbot wasn't sure about his devotion to the temple. Worried that Chun would not honor their way of life, he said, "Later, perhaps," but meant, "No." Chun was broken-hearted.

During every trip, he would return to the temple and practice earnestly, studying, chanting and meditating, but now with the added goal of impressing the abbot enough to learn pottery from the monks. He realized that a large part of why the tea was so nice at the temple had to do with the simple, purple-brown pots the monks were making. He saw them preparing the tea and even tried taking some of the simple leaves the monks dried from the trees at the temple home. When he brewed them using his master's pottery, the tea was nowhere near as

bright. The magical purple pots took on an even greater glow as a result of the astounding way they changed the tea. He tried to describe it to Huang, but Huang just smiled, busy with other things.

After a year or so, Chun's heart was burning with a desire to make a teapot like the monks. He had even convinced Huang to let him take pottery lessons from a local craftsman at home in Nanjing. He enjoyed the feel of the clay and the way he used his leg to spin the wheel, making simple, utilitarian jars (and the potter was happy to have an apprentice, even though he found it silly that Chun was so enthusiastic to learn, especially since he already had a great job). But none of it was the same as the magic purple-brown clay at the Golden Sand Temple. Sometimes the monks felt sorry for Chun and gave him some clay to work with. Though they weren't permitted to teach him, they did offer some pointers.

Eventually, Chun got the hang of the clay and produced his first teapot. He brought it to the abbot. It was actually this teapot that inspired the old monk to change his mind and initiate Chun. He saw the heart, devotion and mindfulness in the pot, which was actually much better than any the monks had ever made in generations of teapot making! He called the magical pot "Gong Chun (供春)," offering to not only send it for firing to the local kiln master, but to open the teachings of meditation, Buddhism and teapot making to Chun. Chun was in Heaven. He had found his calling.

When the Gong Chun pot was fired, he offered it to Huang, reminding him of how these pots were not only beautiful, but had a strange and wonderful effect on tea. Being very sensitive to tea, Huang immediately noticed that what Chun said was not only true, but beyond words. The pot really did make every tea he owned better, brighter and



茶 While we were in Yixing, we asked Master Zhou to demonstrate the making of a Gong Chun teapot (供春壺). He said that he makes one every year, after the Chinese holiday Qing Ming (清明), to honor the heritage of Yixing craftsmanship he owes his heart and soul to. He told us that Gong Chun pots are fun to make, explaining that a potter can play with design. He shaped the pot as he would an ordinary one, and then created the skin using a ceramic tool, a walnut and his fingers to make indentations on the body of the pot, creating a natural texture like bark. As this was only a demonstration, he only made the body. He would need more time to make a pot carefully.

smoother. The effect was nothing short of supernatural. He was blown away, and “Gong Chun” not only became his favorite pot, but the only one he ever wanted to use. After tasting tea from it, he couldn’t stand the tea from his other pots anymore.

Over time, Huang shared his tea and teapot with his friends, who all also noticed how much better their usual teas were in “Gong Chun.” They all wanted their own, which Huang was very proud and happy to commission from Chun. Chun started traveling to the monastery more often, learning about the clay and how to make better teapots. He very quickly outshone his teachers, and was soon teaching all the monks how to improve their pots.

As the demand for Chun’s pots grew, Huang eventually released his old friend from service to the Huang household, so long as he could also buy some pots from him. Chun was ordained a few years later,

helping improve the renown of the temple, for as the monk’s pots got better, they started to fund the monastery through teapot sales alone! Word spread far and wide amongst tea lovers throughout the kingdom that the best teapots, hands down, came from “Master Gong Chun,” as he was then known. And thus the renown of Yixing teapots started to spread, falling more and more in love with the Leaf with each passing year. As the Earth traveled round the sun, teapot craftsmanship would pass beyond the gates of the Golden Sand Temple, filling the homes of all the potters in Yixing. Gong Chun’s vision had been accurate, for the moment he had touched the purple clay for the first time, he had seen a thousand, thousand gorgeous pots, steeping generations of Chajin in joy...



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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
YIXING TEAWARE IN
CHINESE TEA ART

中國茶藝術之宜興茶具的含意



Understanding the importance of Yixingware is a great place to start steeping in the depth of this amazing art. No teaware has held such a long-standing and profound relationship to tea as Yixingware. There is a tremendously vast heritage of skill that goes into producing Yixingware, spanning many disciplines and centuries, and an equally rich culture on the side of Chajin. Let's explore the reasons why!



茶人: Li Guang Chung

There is no other ceramic art quite like Yixing teaware. Its birth coincided with a historic change in Chinese tea culture, when brewing teas in powdered form was replaced by whole leaves. A new kind of pot was required, and the lovers of tea, even centuries ago, wanted something that would enhance their tea in flavor and beauty. Purple-sand clay pots from the now-legendary town of Yixing would find a way to satisfy tea lovers on both these levels of appreciation. In fact, finding a way to balance the elegance and utility of a teapot would become the very standard against which teapots would be weighed and valued. Few other kinds of ceramic art have perfected this juxtaposition of the practical and aesthetic; and few genres of ceramic art have reached such a profound depth and complexity of clay processing, craftsmanship, style and functional design. Furthermore, Yixing teaware has always been enjoyed by people from the whole spectrum of social classes. The court used elegant Yixing pots to brew its tribute teas; and then, like today, one could stroll down the city streets of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or other places where Chinese live, and see groups of people sitting around, pouring tea from these small pots. The legacy of Yixing has, in many ways, become part of the story of tea itself, and their marriage is as perfect as any could be. Many Chinese tea lovers would find it hard to imagine a great tea without an Yixing pot to steep it in.

Some tea drinkers view teapots as nothing more than a vessel in which to steep tea, and yet, even these more practical people will find enjoyment in the world of Yixing. One of my favorite experiments is to brew the same tea, in the same amount, using the same

water temperature, but in several different kinds of teapots: a polycarbonate teapot, glass teapot and an Yixing teapot, for example. On two separate occasions, I conducted this very experiment for a teahouse staff in Houston, as part of their training. More than 80% of the people found the tea brewed in the Yixing teapot to have a better flavor and aroma. Even in function alone, Yixing teaware has made a permanent mark on the history of tea culture.

The Birth of Yixingware

Drinking tea has always been an integral part of life in China. In ancient times, before the Tang Dynasty (618–907), tea was predominantly thought of as a medicinal beverage. It was a part of the herbal pharmacopeia of healers. In other places, tea was simply a thirst-quenching beverage, or even a kind of dietary supplement or vegetable drink. It was sometime between the Tang and Song (960–1279) dynasties that tea grew into a kind of cultural art. Before then, there was no special teaware designed to enhance the consumption of tea. However, during the Tang Dynasty, tea drinking started to become popular among scholars, Buddhist monks and Daoist priests. This new spiritual and aesthetic approach to tea would lead to a refinement of the process, including the whole practice of making tea powder and its complicated brewing. New kinds of teaware, such as wheel grinders to grind the tea into powder, bamboo sieves, storage containers and tea bowls started to appear. Song Dynasty tea culture would then continue to cultivate the same tea method, improving techniques and

even the artistic quality of the various accoutrements used in the tea ceremony that had started in the Tang Dynasty.

Sometime during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), tea art would, in most ways, reach its modern expression—using whole leaves steeped in ceramic teapots. Realizing that too much effort and domestic labor was being wasted on the production of powdered teas to satisfy the need of government officers and royalty, the emperor abolished the tradition of making tribute tea cakes from powder in 1391. He further forbade production of any compressed cakes and changed the powdered tea culture of the previous dynasties to whole tea leaves. Consequently, all the teaware formerly used to prepare powdered teas quickly became obsolete. This revolution in tea culture would make Chinese craftsmen and artisans reconsider teaware, focusing now on the creation of teapots in which to steep tea leaves.

The earliest record of teaware production in Yixing (formerly called Yan Xian) can be traced to the Song Dynasty. Early potters in Yixing used the skills they had learned from making household wares such as urns and vases to begin making teapots. It was not until the period of the Ming Emperor Zheng De (1505–1521) that Yixing teapots were elevated into an art form. Most histories relate this proliferation to the celebrated figure of Gong Chun. Gong Chun was the humble servant of a government officer, so little is known about his background. Many versions of the story tell of a business trip he took with his master. Along the way, he met an old monk in Jin Sha Temple. The monk was also a potter, crafting teapots for the tea he drank.



Gong Chun was intrigued by the way the monk refined the clays and made such “admirable teapots.” He used all his spare time to learn from the monk, and made teapots by hollowing out a glob of clay with a spoon, and then using his bare hands to form the shape of the pot. One day, his master saw his work and liked it so much that he asked Gong Chun to make several more. He gave them to his friends. Within a few years, his works were so famous that he finally left his master and earned a living just by producing teapots. Gong Chun’s work, and financial success, inspired other local potters in Yixing. More and more teapots of different shapes, clay compositions and sizes were produced, and a fashion of collecting quickly formed among the upper class and literati.

Yixingware & Tea Lovers

Much of what makes Yixing teaware so special lies in the constitution of the unique clay ore that is mined there. Many kinds of ore are found in Yixing,

and all of them have the unique characteristic of being completely lead-free, which allows potters to make unglazed pots that can be used for daily consumption. Unglazed clay offers a porous surface that can absorb the flavor of tea over time, a process collectors call “seasoning” the teapot. The spectrum of colors and composition available in Yixing ore is amazing. Yixing is truly blessed to have these various types of clay, all of which are nonpareil in their superb workability, refined texture and naturally beautiful colors. Clays with a low shrinkage rate, such as *zisha* and *duanni*, allow the potters’ imagination to run wild, crafting teapots of different sizes, shapes and styles, but with the same precision that generations of skill have honed. Clays with a very high shrinkage rate, such as *zhuni*, produce teapots of relatively small size and simple shape, but with such ravishingly soft and jade-like texture that they are often the most valuable. Without these special clays, Yixing teaware would never have reached such a noble and distinctive status. In Yixing, “clay master” and “mas-

ter potter” have always been different professions. Although a master potter may enjoy more fame and wealth, a clay master is always regarded with the highest esteem. A well-known collector once said that his love for Yixing started with the appreciation of Yixing clays grew with the exploration of Yixing clays and was ultimately fulfilled with an understanding of Yixing clays.

There has always been an intimacy between Yixing teapots and collectors that few other forms of ceramic art can even approach. Its function as a teaware invites the collector to visit his or her favorite pieces regularly, handling and using them to enhance the tea he or she also loves. Since the time of Gong Chun, collectors have not only paid top-dollar in the pursuit of high-quality Yixing teapots, many have, in fact, participated in the design and creation of Yixing teaware. This fashion reached its peak in the middle of the Qing Dynasty, and the most significant and influential Yixing lover at that time was Chen Meng Shen (1768 –1822). Chen was not a potter. He was a local government officer,

The Emperor and the Teapot



兩個朋友共享茶在群星間



皇帝和魔法老壺



They say the great Emperor Qianlong treasured tea enough that he brewed it in secret with his own august hands, though the son of the gods was forbidden such mundane activities. He also loved to leave the Forbidden City in secret, basking in the glory of ordinariness. He enjoyed the mystery and danger of being amongst his people. He would often disguise himself to walk the streets, visit teahouses and watch shows, admiring the everyday lives of his subjects. One evening, he was strolling home from a show, his bodyguards walking several paces behind to remain anonymous. The emperor suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, uplifted to Heaven by the deep and lasting fragrance of a very fine tea, as fine as the tribute teas shared only with the palace. It smelled of nutty, fruity plums and the best of Chinese herbs, filling the whole of his mind with nostalgia. "What wonderful tea!" he thought. And yet, the only dwelling nearby belonged to a simple farmer. The emperor was curious beyond containment, walking to the open door and with courtesy exclaiming, "Excuse me?" into the dark, lamplit interior, which was so simply adorned with a small shrine to the local land god, a table and two chairs, one of which was occupied by a very old man, whose wrinkles were as telling as the crags of distant Yellow Mountain. "Hello, old friend," the emperor began. "Might I come in?"

"Sure. 'Tis a fine night for a guest," the old man replied with a sweet smile. "Have a seat and share some tea, if you will."

The emperor went inside, signaling to his guards to wait for him, full of joy that he lived in a world so civilized and prosperous that even a simple farmer understood the Way of Tea. The two drank cup after cup of one of the darkest, most delectable aged teas the emperor had ever tasted. Each cup transported him further and further into the mountains, like discovering a partially hidden path leading up—the kind so seldom used

that it is covered with brush, and only discernible to the true mountain man. He lost himself in its splendor, and lost touch with time as well. After some indeterminate number of cups, he looked into the old man's eyes and realized that there was a great and deep wisdom twinkling through the years of life they had observed, many more passing seasons than he. "What is this magical tea?" wondered the emperor. To which the old man giggled in an embarrassed way, "Oh no, noble sir, though I usually do trade for some leaves as I can each year, this year the drought made that impossible. Fortunately, the gods and the wisdom of my ancestors left me this amazing teapot from Jiangsu, used by my father and his father before him, back more than a hundred years. It has seen so much tea, friend, that it brews such liquor with a bit of boiled spring water poured through it."

The emperor was awestruck. He spent half an hour admiring the old pot, holding it up to the light with precious grace and gentle strokes befitting imperial jade. The old man answered all his questions, telling him all he knew of the pot and its origins. A man of tea is changed by such encounters, and the emperor was as pure a Chajin as any. He knew that he had made a lifelong friend tonight, both in the old man and his pot.

Very soon after, the emperor arranged for the old man to come into some fortunate circumstances that increased his family's holdings greatly, without revealing that the newfound abundance was a gift from anyone, let alone the throne. As far as the old man knew, his family was blessed. He also sent envoys to Yixing to bring back the best pots they could find, like the old man's. The craftsmen there were also to be honored. Over the years, the emperor and the old man shared many more wonderful tea sessions together, and more than a few exciting adventures as well, though those are other tea tales for other times...

famous for his works of calligraphy and seal carving. He had befriended several famous Yixing potters, not the least of whom were Yang Pong Nian and Shao Er Chun. Chen designed and drew many different styles of teapots, letting Yang and Shao use his drawings to make new kinds of teapots. Chen himself would then often engrave calligraphy on them. Their joint efforts promoted the art of Yixing teaware to a higher shelf. Their designs have been reproduced countless times throughout all the years since, and their majestic achievements have been the study of generations of Yixing potters and collectors.

Chinese ceramics, calligraphy, seal carving and painting are all very sophisticated art forms. Yixing teaware provides a medium that condenses all these arts into pieces that capture aspects of all of them—focused so inspiringly into beautiful and functional pieces. Tea itself, its production and appreciation, could also be on that list of sophisticated Chinese arts, and it's therefore no surprise that Yixing teaware has enjoyed such intimacy and status in Chinese tea culture. This age-old marriage between tea art and teaware reciprocally encourages the refinement and elevation of both.

The Evolution of Yixing Teaware

China's political and economic centers started to diverge after the Ming Dynasty, during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911): The northern cities remained the home of the emperor, royal family and central government, while the economic powerhouse gradually moved to southern cities along the Yangtze River and the coast. This separation gradually forced the styles of Yixing teaware to evolve and expand, suiting the different tea drinking habits of the northern and southern cities. Tea lovers from the northern cities tended to be government officials, and they liked green teas or flowered teas better. They often shared tea with more people and liked to show off the craftsmanship of their teapots. Therefore, the teapots crafted for that market were of bigger sizes and were often engraved by famous calligraphers or painted by

renowned artists of the day. On the other hand, tea lovers in the southern cities were either commoners or affluent businessmen. They appreciated finely crafted and roasted teas, such as oolongs from Wuyi and Anxi, and had developed the tradition of “gongfu” brewing, primarily using smaller teapots. Yixing potters, with their talent and variety of superb clays, quickly adapted to these market changes and produced a vast array of teapots—from the most stately and luxurious looking to the miniature and delicate. Again, one can see how the changes in Chinese tea culture and the evolution of Yixing teaware have mutually enriched one other.

Looking back from a modern perspective, it is interesting to wonder about the fact that when the Ming Dynasty emperor abolished the making of powdered teas, he didn't realize he had actually been the spark that triggered a volcanic revolution in Chinese tea culture. A vast array of teaware and whole-leaf tea would follow that one small event. The creation of Yixing teaware may just have been a matter of course, meeting a demand for vessels to steep the new teas in, but they have since become so much more. They are in many ways the pinnacle of teaware, both in terms of aesthetics and utility. The extraordinary artistic and functional accomplishments of Yixing teaware can only be explained if we consider these three factors together: the unique and precious Yixing ores/clays, the highly talented and skilled artisans and the passion of tea lovers, which supports the transmission of this tradition, generation after generation to the present day.



茶 These tiny gongfu cups are amongst the first ever made, dating to the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Dark oolong is amazing in these cups, especially when decanted from a 1960s Yixing pot, like this special one, gilded in gold.





PURPLE-SAND ART

PART I: FROM ORE TO CLAY & CRAFT TO ARTWORKS

從礦石到泥與工藝到藝術品

茶人: *Huang Chien Liang* (黃健亮)

Due to its superior compatibility with tea, purple sand became the preferred choice of material for Chinese teapots after the rise of loose-leaf tea and the increasing prominence of tea culture amongst the aristocracy. In the 1600s, Zhou Gaoqi (周高起, 1596–1645) describes in his *Yangxian* (陽羨) *Teapot Series* (Yangxian is modern-day Yixing) that “during the past century (17th century), metal pots, such as silver and tin ones, as well as ceramic pots made in Fujian (福建) and Henan (河南) provinces, have transitioned out of fashion. Nowadays, people have begun to favor teapots made with Yixing (宜興) clay because people have found something in using it that was better than past traditional teapots: the ore and sand from the same mountain where these clay teapots were made was also perfect for enhancing the color, aroma and flavor of tea. The famous poet Du Fu (712–770) once wrote, ‘The clay pots pour out astonishing tea, as compelling as gold and jade.’ Therefore, those who are lofty shall shy away from other teapots.”

Historically, ceramic teapots from Fujian and Jiangxi were famous for their “rabbit fur *tianmu*” (兔毫天目) glaze, known as *tenmoku* in Japanese, and the Jingdezhen (景德鎮) imperial kilns. As an ordinary, local kiln, Yix-

ing eclipsed highly sought-after and imperial kilns, which had been famous for centuries, within a short time. It’s clear that Yixing pots really did have a big advantage for so many people to appreciate them so vocally all of a sudden!

In fact, only decades prior, other tea connoisseurs did not seem to think too much about purple sand (*Zisha*, 紫砂) teapots. For example, Qian Chunnian (錢椿年) comments in *A New Guide to Tea Making* (published circa 1530) that “small teapots with long handles and tea urns are best made of silver and tin. Such teapots that are made of ceramic and stone are second-grade.” In 1590, Tu Long (屠隆) writes in *On Tea* that when selecting teapots “gold and silver are the best. For those who cannot afford them, then ceramic and stone ones are also fine... Clay ones without glaze will leak and the liquor will taste like dirt. If one brews tea with a clay pot, the stench will then linger in the mouth for a very long time. This is so apparent that there is no need to remind even people of lower class about this disadvantage.” The *Tea Classic*, written by Zhang Deqian (張謙德) in 1596, considers the hierarchy of teapots as follows: “Imperial (官), Ge (哥), Xuan (宣) and Ding (定) kilns are the best, gold and silver ones are the second best. Tea mak-

ers would not consider bronze or tin ones.” Obviously, these tea lovers recognized the value and function of gold and silver teaware, placing ceramic second.

However, only a couple of decades after Zhou Gaoqi wrote his book on *Zisha* teapots, Zhou Rong (周容, 1619–1679) dedicated an article to Yixing teapots, “On Yangxian Ceramic Teapots,” in which he claims: “Nowadays, tea drinkers in the Suzhou area only use Yixing teapots.” In 1686, Xu Jiefeng (徐階鳳) recorded in the *Yixing County Gazette*, “Gong Chun (供春) makes teapots in all sorts of shapes and styles. Even though the pots are ceramic, they are treasured throughout the entire country. The tea that is brewed in his pots will not lose its essence. Therefore, all high officials, lofty esquires and the literati are willing to pay a handsome sum for his pots. Furthermore, the works of Shi Da Bin (時大賓, 1573–1648) are also pricey and difficult to attain.” In addition to people’s opinions and writings in the *Gazette*, a remark made by the professional tea critic Feng Kebin (馮可賓) in an article he wrote around 1642, called “On Jie Tea,” became renowned as the most cited quotation regarding the rise of ceramic ware: “For teapots, ceramics are the best, while tin pots are second.”



Miners worked very hard and for little pay. At least five people died a year in the mines to bring up this precious ore. If teapots hadn't been in such high demand, there is no way that people would have worked so hard to make Zisha clay.



Even though there is more than one region where such ore deposits are found, Yixing is the only area with ore suitable for making teapots. Furthermore, Purple-Sand ore is not found everywhere in Yixing. The strata the ore is mined from are only found several hundred meters below sea level. Such deep mining is dangerous; if it wasn't for the high demand for *Zisha* teapots, mining would not have been worthwhile and Chinese tea culture would have developed along different lines.

The *Commentary on the Jing River*, written in 1583 by Wang Zhideng (王稗登), describes the strata of ore as "tall planks among the plateau, which were partially drilled into a reclining slope (for mining)." The strata are composed of thin slabs, ranging from a few decimeters up to one meter thick, and are rarely found in clusters. As a result, the article *Yangxian Teapots* explains, "Purple-Sand ore can be found in various mountains, but the mines must be dug in many locations. Oftentimes, the ore is depleted just as another source of ore is found in a new location. Regardless, all the ore is found several meters underground." Wu Meiding (吴梅鼎, 1631-1700) composed a poem entitled "Ode to Yangxian Teapots" that illustrates how "[one had to] dig deep down for several meters until one hit bony rocks, such as those found high-

er in the mountains." In other words, mining Purple-Sand clay is as difficult as mining coal from deep underground.

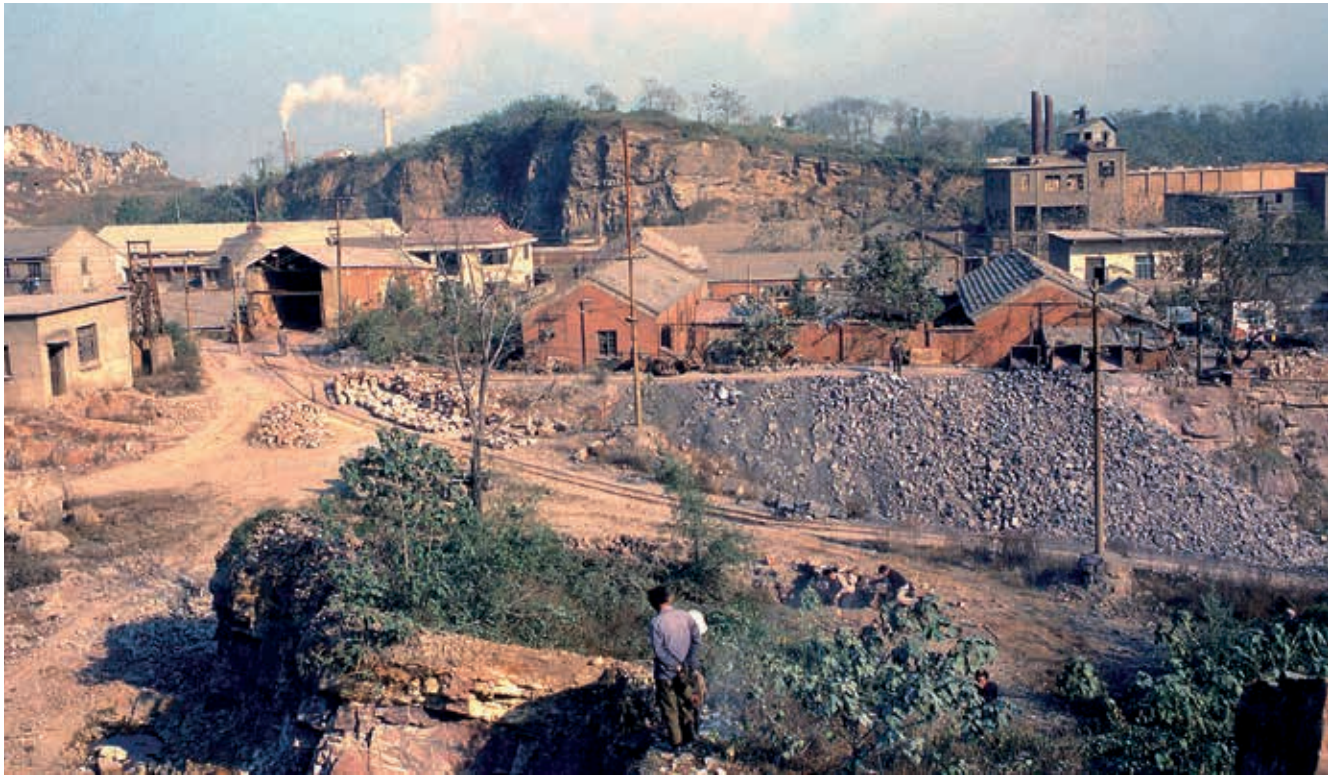
There are many kinds of ore used in making *Zisha* teapots, such as the yellow or white *duanni* deposits that are four to five meters above sea level. The *Illustrated Study of Yangxian Sand Teapots*, co-authored by Li Jingkan (李景康) and Zhang Hong (张虹) in 1937, states that "During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), it had already been several centuries since the mining of *Zisha* ore had begun. After a mountain was depleted of its ore, miners would have to look for suitable clay in other mountains. As the origins and materials present in different ores varied from mountain to mountain, each ore's properties were also different, and hence, the appreciation of teapots had to follow suit, changing as the ore changed."

Out of the various ores found in the Yixing area, *Zisha* is the most suitable for making pottery, since it is strong and can be made into a vessel by itself, without adding any other material. In addition to its perfect combination of elements and metals, and having this preferred configuration in the right amounts, more than 350 million years of maturation has made *Zisha* ores extremely stable. As a result, it has a high

plasticity, a high success rate in making pottery and low shrinkage after firing, making *Zisha* the preferred choice of Yixing potters. These qualities allow craftsmen to form the clay into any desired shape. Compared with clay found in other areas, the iron content in Purple-Sand clay is much higher, with an average of 8–10%, though some *Zisha* clays can even reach an iron content of 11–12%. Consequently, the colors after firing range from iron-red to a dark "liver" color and from the color of a light brick to that of a "frozen pear."

Due to its characteristics, Purple-Sand clay has been referred to as "the clay in clay and the rock within rocks." It is called "purple sand" because of the purple, green, yellow, white, black and/or red sediments or grains in the clay. Among the three main categories of clay (*zisha/zini*, *hongni* and *duanni*), *zini* is the most popular, and is, therefore, what most teapots are made from. *Zini* ore is usually hidden under yellow (*duanni*) ores and between layers of muddy clay (甲泥礦層); hence the nickname, "the clay in the clay and the rock within rocks."

The ore takes on different hues according to the differences in temperature it is exposed to resting for hundreds of millions of years within its environment deep underground.



Some people refer to red clay as “*shihuang* (石黃, literally, “stone yellow”),” because this specific ore is usually located at the bottom of the mine and is as hard as stone. *A Record of Famous Pottery in Yangxian* describes it as “a bony stone that has never seen the wind and sun.” It usually turns a vermilion reddish color after firing that is called *zhuni* (朱泥, literally, “vermilion clay”). It is high in iron, difficult to mine and low in supply.

Starting in the 1950s, miners in Yixing found a specific kind of yellowish-green colored ore near the Chuanfu (川埠) and Fuding (淤東) areas of Yixing. This kind of powdery clay works like the hard-to-find *shihuang* red clay and is referred to as “Little *Hongni* (小紅泥)” or “*Hongni* Junior (紅泥初).” *Hongni* does not require such high temperatures to fire, and it cannot be made into large-sized objects, as large pieces will change shape during firing. As a result, it is usually made into small objects or used as decoration on other objects. *Hongni* pieces were exported to Europe in the late 17th century, and small pots sold to Southeast Asia and Southern Fujian during this time were also mostly made from *hongni*.

Genuine green clay (*luni*, 綠泥), sometimes referred to as “Original Mountain Green Clay (本山綠泥),”

is green in its placer state and turns creamy yellow after firing, which is why it is classified as a kind of *duanni*. It is only found in sections between purple ore, and is thus referred to as “segmented clay” or “*duanni* (段泥).” Since green ore is only found in sections, the supply of this clay is also low. Therefore, it is mostly made into small objects or used as decoration and cosmetic layers on *Zisha* pieces.

Purple-Sand ore mined right out of a sedimentary layer is not ready to be made into any object yet, and is called “raw ore.” It must be sun-dried and thoroughly broken into smaller pieces, then left outdoors for at least three years. The clay is then ground into a fine powder, sieved and mixed with water. The above process is carried out manually by the so-called “quarry workers (宕戶),” “the persons who make liquid clay (擔戶)” and the “miller who grinds the sandy rocks into fine powder (磨坊人家),” with the help of animals or grinders in the modern age. At this point, the clay can be made into blocks of different qualities for sale. However, potters cannot yet use these processed clay blocks to make anything. The potters first need to store these newly formed clay blocks in cellars that are sealed tightly, keeping out sun and airflow, in order to control the temperature and raise the

humidity of the storage. This slow process of maturation, decomposition, and to some extent, fermentation changes the property of the clay—this process is called “cultivation (養土).” This procedure, from ore to clay, is recorded in *A Record of Famous Pottery in Yangxian*: “The potters dig a big hole out in the open, allowing the colored earth to crumble. They grind and soak the powder, dry it out and then remix the powder with water again. Then, the prepared clay blocks are stored inside sealed cellars, which is termed ‘cultivating the earth.’”

During the cultivation period, the water content in the clay blocks becomes more even. As a result, the organic substances decompose into components that make the clay more plastic and less likely to crack when fired. In general, it takes a minimum of one year to cultivate the clay. However, the longer the cultivation time, the better the final quality will be. Since the 14th century, potters in Yixing have learned to stock up on clay blocks and store them in cellars. When they acquire some clay that is of good quality, potters will culture the blocks for decades, never using the clay to make pots unless a great opportunity arises to make something special. Most clay producers and teapot makers feel that the longer the clay ages, the better.



According to chemical analysis, Purple-Sand ore can be more than 350 million years old, with a stable and preferred chemical composition, mineral content and grain size for making teapots. As a result, it can be made into teapots by itself, without any additives. It can be found underground in various areas, each in different amounts. All the raw materials harvested from different strata contain different amounts of elements, such as iron and other minerals. After using “various methods that would not be shared with other craftsmen,” (secrets, in other words!) clay makers sort and process all the raw materials into clay blocks of various grades, textures and colors. Additionally, the clay manifests different colors due to different methods and temperatures of firing. The variety of ores, firing methods and temperatures are the reasons why *Zisha* pots show a spectrum of colors. *A Record of Famous Pottery in Yangxian* lists the wide range of colors of *Zisha* pots: “Earthen, yellow-colored clay... will turn vermilion colors after firing.... Clay of a sky-blue color... will turn a dark liver color after firing; while the pear-skin color of a neighboring ore will turn into a frozen-pear color. Clay of a light red color will turn a greenish-yellow after firing, and clay of a light yellow color will turn pea-colored. Light red-

colored clay will turn a light brick color. When pear-skin-colored clay is mixed with white clay, it will turn a light ink-black color after firing.” The wide spectrum of colors after firing clay made from Yixing purple-sand is something very different from all other types of clay in the world.

For potters, the following physical advantages, such as high success rate in forming pots, low contraction after firing and high plasticity, make *Zisha* a preferred material for making teapots of all imaginable shapes and incredible designs. In fact, this combination of outstanding properties, along with the ingenious craftsmanship of teapot makers in Yixing, is the reason why Purple-Sand teapots have become such an important part of the history of Chinese pottery and ceramics.

Characteristics of Yixing Teapots

Traditionally, *Zisha* teapots are not glazed. As time goes by, a teapot’s naturally smooth and luminous surface will gain more of a shine the more human connection it has, changing from the tea we brew and even from our hands. This is another special feature not seen in pottery crafted elsewhere, which requires glaze to create shiny surfaces. The artist and professor from the

Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, Gao Zhuang (高莊) once composed a poem, in which he declares, “I am in love with *Zisha*, for it is void of glaze. It is as if one were wearing what’s inside. It does not need any clothing to boost its value. It only relies on its own nature, and that’s why I love it!” Without the enhancement or cover-up afforded by glaze, *Zisha* craftsmen must become extremely skillful in making smooth surfaces. This demonstrates how important craftsmanship and tools are in making *Zisha* teapots. Professor Li Yanzu (李砚祖) points out that “from the perspective of craftsmanship, the quality of tools influences the craft and could even lead to different methods in a craft.”

In fact, the tools involved in making *Zisha* teapots are the most complicated of all pottery in China. By the mid-17th century, tools in Yixing teapot making had evolved into a standard of at least ten different tools, as Zhou Rong records in his book, *On Yixing Ceramic Teapots*. Potters employ these tools skillfully in hundreds of tedious procedures so that the shapes and curvatures of the pots are as perfect as heavenly pearls and jade. The most skillful of these craftsmen can match the lid to the mouth within a fine space of less than 0.5 mm, which is not possible with other materials.

For other pots, such as a water urn, the average size of the gap between the lid and mouth is 1.5 mm. All famous potters in Yixing have been meticulous in matching the lid to the mouth. Chen Zhan (陳鱣, 1753–1817), in his *Writings from the Pine Ink-Slab Studio*, writes thus about Shi Da Bin's craftsmanship: "Even though one cannot lift the entire pot by only holding the lid, after the lid was put into the mouth, it would not budge at all. This shows that he was not famous for nothing." Due to his careful work, the lids of his pots could be put in from any random angle and the lid would always fit the mouth tightly. For pots with some specific patterns on the body, the lid will not only match the patterns but will also always fit in all angles tightly without any problem. To be able to always make pots in a perfect sphere free-hand and match the lids and bodies with intricate patterns before the era of machinery certainly earns Shi Da Bin the title of Grand Master, not to mention the centuries of respect that have followed him. Zhang Yanchang (張燕昌, 1738–1814) once described a teapot by Shi Da Bin: "My late father was very fond of drinking tea.

He once had a small teapot of an octagonal, floral shape, with Shi's signature on the side. No matter from which angle one put the lid on the mouth, [it would fit so tightly that] one could always lift up the entire pot afterward." Furthermore, the tighter the lid fits the mouth, the less likely it is that airborne bacteria will fall into the pot. This is the reason why tea left in *Zisha* teapots does not easily spoil, even if left steeping or as leaves for a long period.

Similar to other antiques, such as jade and furniture, the craftsmanship of the potter also makes an impact on the value of the item in addition to the materials used. In general, there are seven steps in making *Zisha* pottery: culturing the clay, making the shape, carving (decorations), bisque firing, refining the pot, second firing and cleaning, while the most important step is making the shape. The pots are not formed using a pottery wheel, but through very special techniques called "making the body" and "decorating the body." The former is employed to make spherical pots, while the latter is used in the process of making geometrical pots. When reviewing the history of crafts in China, it appears that the

water jar makers of Yixing must have inspired the way potters make spherical pots.

Since the Song Dynasty (960–1279), these utilitarian, large-sized water jars have enjoyed much popularity, and the industry soared. The bodies of these water jars are thick-walled and made from compact materials. The material for these large water jars is not made from pure clay; instead, ground ore from deep underground is added to the clay. Since the desired size is too large for pottery wheels, the local water jar craftsmen developed a kind of slab method to form the water jars. By using large slabs of clay, the craftsman builds the body to a certain height, and then pounds the clay from both the outside and inside to make the body more round. While part of the body dries, the craftsman continues to pile slabs of clay onto the body of the jar. This procedure is typically repeated three times or more before forming the final shape of a water jar. This special slab method surely influenced the budding *Zisha* pottery industry. During the Ming Dynasty, Purple-Sand teapots were generally made by either pasting clay slabs or stacking sectioned,



The mining and grinding of ore into clay was done by hand. Later, the handmade steps were replaced by oxen. In more modern times, clay started to be processed by machine. Many teachers often suggest that the difference is one reason that antique pots are better.

wooden molds onto stone. Once both the lid and bottom part of the clay body were set in their appropriate sections on the stone, the mold of the pot would then be removed. Afterward, the partially dried clay body was finished by adhering the sections together with wet clay.

Alternatively, Shi Da Bin developed his own crafting method, which did not rely on the use of molds and brought back the use of small pottery wheels by combining it with a technique of pounding clay slabs on a wheel. In 1966, the only confirmed pot dating to the early 16th century was excavated from the tomb of an influential eunuch, Wu Jing (吳經, d. 1533), outside the Zhonghua Gate of Nanjing. I was fortunate enough to see it personally when I attended the Clay Teapot Academic Forum held by the Nanjing Museum in 2004. Scraping marks are visible on the outside of the spout, while appliqué decorations in the shape of persimmon petals have been applied to the base of the spout that connects it to the body of the pot. Even though the appliqué work is not delicate, the linearity of this section of the teapot has not been compromised.

Though there are signs of scraping, scratching and cutting, the pot shows no sign of polishing performed with finer tools. While a trace of joining the sections together, between the upper and lower parts, can be detected in the middle of the body, the joint is not clearly visible from the outside of the pot. This method is recorded by Zhou Gaoqi in his *Yangxian Teapot Series*, describing how Gong Chun “would build the body in sections. As a result, a sign of horizontal joint would be visible in the middle of the body.” The archaeological finding of this cane-handled teapot in Wujing’s tomb exhibits a transition of craftsmanship in Purple-Sand teapots from the slab method inspired by the technique commonly used in forming large water jars, to its own method of slab pounding. Along with a reduction in the size of the pots over time, and the evolution of finer craftsmanship, potters discarded the molds of the early days and learned to do without joining the two sections of a teapot’s body together. Instead, the craftsman holds the inside of the pot with his left hand while using his right hand to pound the clay body with tools. The body is then

pounded into the desired curvature and gradually becomes a sphere as a result. This technique is the “pounding body method” now commonly used by Purple-Sand clay teapot makers.

The other method for making Purple-Sand teapots is employed to make four-sided, six-sided or eight-sided geometric-shaped pots. This method joins several clay slabs together to form the pot, and is inspired by the techniques used in making tin crafts. However, this method is actually a more difficult process than the previously mentioned method of slab pounding, because if any element is slightly off, such as the humidity of the slabs or their angles, the body will certainly collapse during the second, high-temperature firing (a firing that often involves temperatures higher than 1000 °C).

This tin-crafting technique influenced the *Zisha* industry after the 15th century. Take the teapot excavated from Wujing’s tomb as an example: the craftsman made the spout of this teapot by first opening a hole in the belly of the pot, after the spout was attached to the hole, and then applying the persimmon petals to the base.



Making large water urns like these surely influenced the methods used to make teapots, since these pots have been made for much longer. Eventually, as skills, techniques and tools improved, teapot making would develop its own methods, which are adapted from the craft of making large urns.

一門手藝的工具 TOOLS OF THE TRADE



Mallets for flattening clay into strips to form the body.



"Bright needles (明針)" are ox horn scrapers for smoothing.



Paddles are for shaping the body of pots by slapping the sides.



These bamboo tools are for shaping and decorating details of the pot.



Bamboo picks for cleaning, opening and smoothing small holes.



Metal picks for even finer details and for making sieve holes.



Bamboo scrapers are for smoothing the round sides of pot bodies.



These bamboo tools are for fine detail work throughout the process.



These round pegs are for smoothing the spout and button holes.



Calipers are for cutting circles or measuring clay to fit together.



Wheels for spinning the pot and round blocks for a smooth mouth.



Various tools for smoothing the inside of the mouth, depending on shape.

已故的工匠仍活在他的藝術裡



茶 Above is an old picture of Yixing craftsmen working on bonsai pots from the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) or the beginning of the Republic Era (1911-1949). The gentleman on the far right reminds us of Master Zhou. Perhaps he is an ancestor... Below is a teapot from the same period, maybe even made by these craftsmen. It is made of excellent clay, and makes wonderful alchemy: soft, smooth and bright tea liquor that shines.

Famous Early Yixing Artisans

早期著名宜興壺藝家

Throughout this issue, you will hear the name “Shi Da Bin (時大彬)” quite often, and that is because one cannot have a discussion of Yixing art without his name coming up. After Gong Chun (供春), he is perhaps the most important teapot maker. Shi Da Bin was born into Yixingware. His father, Shi Peng, was also a great master. Apparently, historians have traced the Shi family back to the Song Dynasty (960–1279). He may have been born in 1567, but no one is sure. He copied the works of Gong Chun (供春) until he eventually developed his own style. His methods of creating pots and the styles he produced influenced Yixingware from then until now. Even during his lifetime he became incredibly renowned. He was commissioned to make pots for several officials of high rank and is mentioned in tea literature, including the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) classics we translated in April of this year.

Hui Meng Chen (惠孟臣) is another constellation in the Yixing sky. He lived in the late Ming Dynasty. He is acclaimed as the father of modern Yixing teapots, because he is said to be the first master to make smaller pots for the emergence of gongfu tea brewing in the South, designing nice pots for oolong preparation. Many masters from then till now have signed their pots with his name in honor of the heritage to which they belong. As unknown craftsmen, they embody the spirit of Tea, offered freely without returns.

After Hui Meng Chen comes another of the great heroes of Yixing, whose name also has adorned thousands of pots, and after Gong Chun and Shi Da Bin, he is probably the most well-known Yixing artist of all time: Chen Ming Yuan (陳鳴遠). Chen lived in the early Qing Dynasty. He was very innovative, creating many new styles of pot. He refined the art, adding more detail and flair to pots, in some ways heralding the artistic era of Yixingware.

As the literati of China became more and more interested in Yixingware in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the art began to change rapidly, influenced by calligraphy, metalwork, scholarly desktop objects and other designs favored by the aristocracy. During the Jia Qing and Dao Guang reigns (1796–1850), a large group of scholars led by Chen Man Sheng (陳曼生) worked to elevate Yixingware to a new level by making pots that combined poetry, calligraphy, seal-carving and pottery—all of the scholar’s favorite arts. Shao Da Heng (邵大亨) was one famous potter from the period who participated in these changes. He is amongst the most influential of all early Yixing craftsmen.

These petals also serve as a decoration to cover the joint; on the other hand, the added pieces fortify the structure at the point where the spout joins the body. This method takes after the process used in forming metal crafts.

Two different ways of joining the spout to the pot were utilized in later periods. The first method directly adheres the two pieces together in a straight angle using slip (wet clay). The other method places a coil of clay onto the joint of the body, and then the excess clay is scraped off, resulting in a curve at the newly formed joint. With the help of these special techniques and tools, generations of Yixing potters have created teapots in a myriad of shapes and decorative styles. In his

Ode to Yangxian Teapots, Wu Meiding writes that “the character ‘cube (立方)’ is merely a namesake, while ‘sphere (球形)’ comes in all shapes. Words can barely express these shapes, and this rhapsody cannot describe them either.” Since all these various shapes were entirely made by hand, craftsmen required a variety of tools to achieve their intended designs. A record of Yixing ceramics from the 17th century, for example, claims that there are more than ten different kinds of bamboo blades alone for making *Zisha* pottery! Different kinds of tools were created for different purposes, and each tool comes in different sizes and angles. Therefore, it is not uncommon for any given potter to own more than one

hundred tools for the sole purpose of making teapots! Traditionally, potters had to make their own tools. Thus, the first three years of being an apprentice to a potter were generally spent learning how to make tools and slabs of clay.

Another special feature of making Purple-Sand teapots is the “refining process.” This process is the final cosmetic touch-up for the pot, and is considered one of the most crucial steps in making a teapot. Using tools, such as bamboo molds, “bright needles (明針)” and knives to scrape and smooth the clay repeatedly, the potter refines and tunes the shape and surface of the pot. “Bright Needles” are the key feature of this refining process. These so-called “Bright Needles” are



Left/Above: These pictures show how traditional Chinese tin-crafting influenced the production of Yixing-ware, just as large water jars did. The spouts were held on with flat decorative slabs, which also served to support and strengthen the point of connection.

Below: Diamond Gourd Pot with persimmon decorations on it from the Ming Dynasty. Photographs from the Liu Zhou Museum. This teapot was made by Shi Da Bin and demonstrates the mastery of his craftsmanship. The second picture shows his name under the handle.



thin ox-horn sheets that are tailored to fit any desired curvature after being soaked in water for a period of time. In addition, these sheets are also flexible enough that craftsmen can control the pressure from their fingertips.

Since glaze is not applied to *Zisha* pots, these advanced procedures are all the more important to the teapot making process. Since the matured sand grains in the clay are not unified in size, the surface of the clay will not be even. As a result, potters have invented all kinds of tools to press down the protruding particles so that the finished surface will be smooth. Furthermore, with the help of these “bright needles (ox-horn sheets),” the thin, moist layer on the surface of the body will form a

tight and robust layer on the outside of the piece. *Ode to Yangxian Teapots* also alludes to this refining process: “After being used for a while, *Zisha* pots will become more and more glossy, reflecting other objects like mirrors. When they are taken out of the kiln, their value is no less than bronze (凝銅).” The entire clay slab is evenly made compact during the process. However, though the meticulous refining process seemingly makes no changes to the appearance, a glossy, smoothly fused layer will form on the surface of the pot after the firing. Therefore, even though glaze is never applied to the pots, they are shiny after firing and become even more luminous with proper care and seasoning. More importantly, these

advanced processes pressurize the surface and make the pores bigger inside the pot when compared to the smaller pores formed on the outside, which is advantageous for encouraging the color, fragrance and flavor of the tea prepared in a *Zisha* pot; which is, after all, the real reason for all this art and craft. Centuries of work and craft, heart and soul to honor the Leaf. A teapot can take weeks or even months to create, but it is then enjoyed for a lifetime. Sometimes, teapots are cared for as treasures and handed down generationally. Many tea lovers appreciate antique teapots, claiming they make better tea, which means that some pots are still in use even centuries after they were crafted.

製作球形壺身 MAKING THE BODY OF A ROUND TEAPOT



First, a long strip of clay is made and wrapped around in a circle.



The joints overlap to make a perfect ring of clay.



With a paddle and a scraper, the ring is sealed together.



Slapping the body as it turns makes it into a round shape.



The opening is measured, and a corresponding circle is cut out.



Wet slip is placed on the opening to form an adhesive.



The round piece is sealed in, forming the bottom of the pot.



The pot is turned over right-side, and slapped more to shape the top part.



After sealing another ring in the hole, the body is smoothed and shaped.



The sieve is then burrowed out using a bamboo or metal pick.



The spout and handle are shaped separately, then attached and refined.



The mouth is cut open so that a crafted lid can be created.

製作幾何壺身 MAKING THE BODY OF A GEOMETRIC TEAPOT



Paper stencils are used to cut out the necessary pieces used in the pot.



Each piece is carefully cut out and then refined.



Wet slip is applied to the sides of each of the pieces.



The walls and bottom of the pot are joined together neatly.



The creases of the joints are then smoothed out and refined.



The top piece is then adhered to the body, forming a cube.



Wet slip is added to the pieces that will form the lid of the pot.



The lid and button are joined together and refined until they are smooth.



The pieces for the spout are all cut out very neatly from a slab.



The spout is formed together with slip, and then cleaned at the edges.



The handle, formed like the spout, and spout are attached to the body.



The maker stamps his chop to the pot before drying it for some time.

HOW TO CHOOSE 如何 AN YIXING TEAPOT 選擇壺



One of the Yixing-related questions that we get asked the most is how to choose an Yixing pot. There are so many inauthentic pots, that this topic has become more and more relevant. We thought Wu De should sit down and share his experience selecting and using Yixing teapots over the years, knowing that some of the tangents that come out of such an exploration would yield some interesting and informative ideas. We weren't wrong!



茶人: Wu De

When I repeat what my teacher, Master Lin Pin Xiang, always says about teaware, “There is *zisha* and there is no second!” I feel how strong of a statement this is reflected in the widening, startled eyes of the listener who glares back a “Really?” Usually, Daoist and Buddhist masters don’t like absolutes. Lao Tze said, “He who knows doesn’t speak, while he who speaks doesn’t know.” The Buddha himself avoided hardline tactics, as words and concepts never hold enough weight to be absolute, though they may point the direction towards absolute. Worse, taking a strong stance invites argument and disagreement. It is drawing a line intellectual types will cross just to play devil’s advocate. Whenever people came to the Buddha with argumentative questions, or questions that sought to explore definitively absolute principles, he would stay silent—avoiding controversy, and, ultimately, answering with his silence and strong presence in the moment. And yet, despite the fact that our hearts are more loose, carefree and easy-going (Master Lin’s more relaxed and centered than mine), we still pronounce that *zisha* teaware is the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. Actually, this isn’t meant to stir controversy. We make the claim because there is truth in it. More importantly, this claim is an invitation to explore and experiment, and rather than being put off by the idea that there “is no second” after Yixing *zisha* clay, take it as a challenge—an opportunity to explore, learn and discover genuine Yixing clay and test it out with your favorite teas. So, once again, I throw down the gauntlet. You ask what teaware is good for tea, to which I grin in a sly way and exclaim, “There is *zisha* and there is no second!”

I sincerely hope that this issue inspires you to dive in and begin to explore the wonderful world of *zisha*, learning to appreciate the craftsmanship and aesthetic beauty that is so deeply enriched by centuries of mastery. I hope you also begin to love the simple curves and elegance of earthen colors. And as you work with *zisha* clay, and begin gongfu brewing, I also hope you discover the magical and wondrous effect that *zisha* has on tea, which is the real reason Yixing is the “Father of Tea.” There is a great magic in Yixing teaware, and the further you travel on a tea road, the more you fall in love with Yixingware. Sometimes, I must confess, I choose tea I will drink that day not based on the season, occasion and other factors that usually inform such decisions, but based exclusively on which of the Center’s teapots I wish to caress and love that day! The pots here have become dear friends, and I honestly do occasionally come to miss them.

In this article, I hope to address the three main topics of inquiry that always come up when one begins exploring Yixingware. (They certainly did for me.) I’m sure that many of you will also be wondering about these issues: First, how do we choose an Yixing pot? We will explore clay types and why they are important, as well as the shape and design of the pot and its influence on tea preparation. The second question most beginners have is about using which kind of pot for which teas. We will discuss how to use just one pot, and how many and which kind of Yixing pot you would need to brew any and all teas gongfu style. Finally, our Yixing journey will take us back in time, as we explore antique Yixingware and why it makes much better tea than modern pots. Now is a great time to

put a kettle on, get out your favorite pot and steep up some nice Yixing gongfu red tea, and we’ll start our journey with how to choose an Yixing pot while yours steeps!

How to Choose a Teapot

Wherever a discussion of gongfu tea or Yixing comes up, tea lovers are always asking about how to choose an Yixing pot. Journeys into a subject are always from the gross to the subtle, the general to the specific. To begin moving towards choosing a teapot, from as wide and open a vantage as possible, I would like to start by saying that there is certainly a story and some destiny involved in finding your pot. To adapt the saying in our tradition about how “as the person seeks the Leaf, the Leaf seeks the person,” we could also say that as the person seeks the teapot, the teapot seeks the person. The best pots are found through travel, friendship and generosity, meeting the craftsman him or herself or a story that enriches the pot, imbuing it with a charm and glow beyond its form.

As a Chajin learns to re-connect to Nature, feeling more and more within the world, she restores and regains the indigenous, wild soul—watering the dusty, soulless worldview she was raised in and allowing green life to grow again. The living world starts to come alive again; the inanimate world she was socialized to see returns to the breathing, living world of her childhood. If you let Tea into your heart, she helps you to see the Nature in things: to look at food and see the sun, rain and soil, as well as the farmer’s work; to look at a glass and see the sand, the beach and the endless ocean waves that made it over centuries; and, of course,

一個真正忠實朋友



to look deeper into one's teaware and see a living friend made of ore formed over millions of years, mined and ground, shaped and sculpted into this pot. When you stand back, you realize that it actually took millions of years to make your teapot, and that it was made as much by Mother Earth as by the craftsman.

Aesthetics

Moving from the more universal, natural aspects of teaware to the material itself, one must start the evaluative process with some aesthetics. Teapot aesthetics, however, are subjective and difficult to discuss. My favorite style of pot, for example, is *Ju Lun Zhu* (巨輪珠), which, as we discussed in the March issue of this year, are very simple and rustic—intentionally so. They are often unfinished on the inside, have loose lids and craft marks, which are intentionally left in place so that the pots feel unfinished. Other pots are fancy, with elegance and grace in curvy

flow that is delightful. A personal balance must be struck between form and function, beauty and usefulness.

From a very general perspective, the same aesthetic governs all of tea practice, from farming to tea processing, and *chaxi* to brewing: *harmony*. It is balance and harmony that makes a great pot. This includes the space around the button/pearl, through the handle and even around the spout. Echoing the favorite analogy of our eldest teacher, Lao Tze, the usefulness of the teapot also lies in its space—the tea flows *through* it, just as the Dao flows through us when we are clean and pure. And then, when we brew our teas, the improvement in aroma and flavor will help us judge our friendship with any given pot. Because of this combination of function and design, Yixing teapots have achieved a legacy of their own, finding a central place in the story of tea.

If the spout is dainty and soft, the handle will be smaller, whereas a pot with a strong, forceful spout will need a jutting, equally strong handle to cre-

ate balance. Master Lin often refers to the aesthetics of a teapot as a horse: the spout is the horse's head and the handle its reigns, so if the horse is bucking wildly, chomping to gallop away, the reigns must be pulled back and away more forcibly. If the horse is trotting gently, on the other hand, the reigns can be let go of, given over to the horse. Holding a pot up, there should be balance and harmony between the spout and handle. This is actually more than aesthetics, as it will also influence the way the pot pours. The button/pearl also needs to be the right size and shape to harmonize with the spout and handle properly, anchoring the symmetry, since it is centered right above the body. And, of course, the body itself will define the spout and handle, so it is made first. If you look at some of the classic designs in this magazine, you will see that the great masters who created these designs were brilliant at creating a moving harmony and grace.

Yixing pots are not made on wheels, but slab-built. They are tapped, pounded, shaped and sculpted by hand. This



茶 To us, the most beautiful pots are not the elegant, shiny, perfect ones collectors put on their shelves, but rather the pots designed to make fine tea, like this early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) zisha teapot. The chips, dents and water marks (from using spring water) have all changed this pot over the centuries. It glows from within, shining in the radiance of ten-thousand cups. That use, polished by the hands of tea lovers, forms our teapot aesthetics.

process can take days or even weeks to complete. There is a tremendous art and skill that goes into this process, and those who devote themselves to this craft are truly artists of the highest order. That said, I personally am far more interested in Yixingware as a teapot, as function, than as art. This doesn't mean that it is somehow lesser when it is pure art, or even that I am unable to appreciate the art of a beautiful pot; it means that for me the beauty of an Yixing pot is in the place where its form and function meet—when the harmony and balance of the pot results not just in something beautiful to the eyes, but something that is also a glory to touch, hold and use. And, most importantly, the greatest beauty for me comes when a pot makes fine tea.

The art and craftsmanship in Yixing has continued until the modern era, with amazingly beautiful and even new, ingenious designs being created all the time. And those who collect Yixingware as art are more than fully welcome to do so—I celebrate this art, in fact. Art doesn't have to be func-

tional, even teapot art. A painting or sculpture doesn't have to do something other than inspire us. However, I do find it sad that since the road to success has been so strongly defined in artistic terms, Yixing craftsmanship has very much lost the relationship between Yixing pots and tea. Fine pots are judged by appearance nowadays. The relationship between the pot and gongfu tea, and worse, the clay and tea (which we will get to shortly), has, for the most part, been lost. It is harder nowadays to find a simple teapot, in other words. Though I don't collect Yixingware as art, I love it and appreciate it—I just wish Yixing craftsmanship struck a greater balance between teapot art and function, as it did back in the olden days when there were three kinds of pots: those made simple and exclusively for tea brewing without consideration for aesthetics, the pots made by masters that had an exquisite balance of form and function and, finally, the pots that were purely artistic and made to be admired rather than used.

While I appreciate the art of Yixing, function is more relevant to me as a Chajin, so I would like to discuss some of the aesthetic factors that also have a functional dimension, as they are the focus of my own decisions when choosing an Yixing pot.

Firstly, plain teapots make the best tea. Any carving or dimensional decoration will influence the way the pot holds temperature and result in lower quality tea. A simple design is always better for tea. Carvings or decorations that stick out from the pot create more surface area and you lose some of the capillary action that makes Yixing pots breathe. This means that the tea won't be as stable and the temperature less consistent. Remember, consistency is the key to fine brewing in gongfu style. If the temperature stays the same and my movements are gentle and soft, the tea becomes more patient, smooth and balanced. Tea trees thrive in environments that have gentle, smooth and consistent temperature and humidity, so we prepare tea in the same way as it grows in Nature.

Personally, I agree with Lu Yu, who said in the *Tea Sutra* (茶經), “The spirit of tea is frugality.” I think that he was paying homage to the simplicity of Chajin and of tea. Tea is very much a ceremony to celebrate the ordinary. For me, the best pots are simple. I like humble, rustic teapots like *Ju Lun Zhu* (巨輪珠) for this reason. I think the beauty and glory of Yixingware is expressed beautifully in the simple and ordinary pot, which makes nice tea and brings a glow to the simple and ordinary moments of our lives, which translates to more gratitude and appreciation of life in general.

A well-made teapot should feel like it is part of your hand. It should attach to you when you pick it up, as though it was made to be used. The best pots really do feel like they were made for your hand, and rise up so gently and perfectly. There is a connection that is tacit, like a magnetic attraction, when you hold the pot by the body with your off-hand and slowly bring it towards your strong hand. They snap together perfectly. This may sound too meta-

physical, but there is an actual sensation of connection when you bring a fine pot to and from the strong hand in this way! The best teapots are also perfectly balanced, which results in a very smooth and gentle pour. The center of balance is harmonized between the spout and the handle, allowing for a graceful decantation of the tea liquor. There is more in the craftsmanship that lends itself to fine tea, but to separate the qualities of the pot from the aesthetic aspects, I have called these criteria “design.”

Design

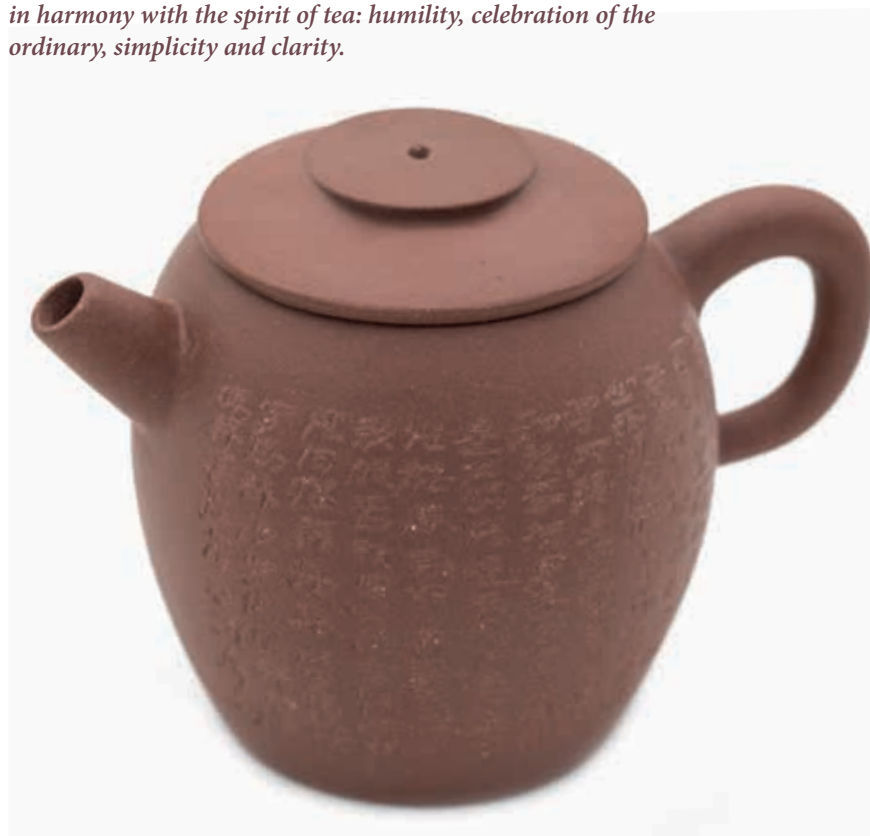
The design of a pot refers to the shape, the spout design and pour, as well as other details of the construction that are less tangled up with aesthetics and more pure function. In other words, some of the features of a pot are best when crafted in an aesthetically pleasing and equally functional way. What we will discuss now as the “design” of the pot are aspects of the pot

that are more strictly functional, and so only really become evident when using the pot to prepare tea.

The first aspect of design worth mentioning was already discussed above, as it is also an aspect of the aesthetics of a pot: a good pot should be balanced well. When a pot is balanced well, it will pour smoothly and more gracefully, resulting in finer tea. The second aspect of a well-designed pot is often contrary to the craftsmanship and artistic sensibility of teapot makers and collectors both. It is often assumed that well-crafted pots should have a perfect, tight-fitting lid. Teapot makers strive to achieve this, and collectors often check when they are evaluating a pot. However, I always wondered why less antique pots had such tight lids, especially considering that modern craftsmen and collectors both often say that the talent and skill of their ancestors far exceeded the modern era. Over time, I began to realize that a tight lid affects the pour. Oftentimes, the small amount of air entering through the hole in the button/pearl or lid is not enough. I even noticed some tea teachers leaning the lid open at later stages in the pour, especially with teas like sheng puerh, when you want to decant the liquor as quickly as possible. Since modern pots are often created with an ideal of a tight lid, these tea brewers had naturally found that tilting the lid at the end of the pour increased flow. I naturally started experimenting, and have since incorporated this technique with some of our pots. But it is not always needed with our antique pots, as the give in the lid allows more airflow, and therefore, greater control over the pour. One could argue that the looseness of antique lids has to do with wood-firing and less control over temperature and shrinkage, which may be true in some cases, but I feel it also has to do with this issue.

Another important design feature is a roundish body that opens in the middle, leaving room for the tea leaves to open and expand. This helps promote smooth and clear tea sessions from start to finish. The more round a pot is, fattening at the middle like an oval, the more suitable it will be for every kind of tea, from puerh to striped oolong teas. Other shapes may be better for certain kinds of tea only, which we will talk about later on.

茶 *Ju Lun Zhu* (巨輪珠) is one of our favorite shapes of teapots, if not our favorite. The cannon spout offers supreme control over pouring speed and distance. The lid can be awkward, but one gets used to it. And the simple, rustic style is in harmony with the spirit of tea: humility, celebration of the ordinary, simplicity and clarity.





茶 This is a close-up of a genuine zisha pot (bottom) versus one using clay from other sources plus iron oxide to make the pot more red (top). Looking closely helps one to understand a few things: First of all, you can see why it is called “purple-sand” clay, as there are grains of sand all throughout. Maybe in looking at this, we can begin to understand why this clay works with tea so magically. Since Yixing pots come from such grainy, rocky ore, as opposed to clay, and are built, rather than thrown on a wheel, the finished pot is as close to the Earth element as a pottery vessel can be. It is as close as ceramics can get to raw Earth, in other words. In this way, we are brewing tea in a similar energy to what its roots found home in. This also helps explain one of the many reasons why antique pots are better than newer ones, in that the firing turns the Earth element into Fire and the further away the pot gets from its firing, the more it settles into something resembling its earthen form when it was ore in the ground. The second thing you can notice by looking at the clay in such detail is that the inauthentic clay has far fewer grains, because it comes from clay, not ore processed into clay. Finally, though the magnification is not strong enough to see the pores, you can see how much smoother and finer the hongni is. It breathes less, doesn’t hold heat as well, and is therefore not ideal for most tea. It is more glossy and much less natural than the authentic zisha clay. (Note: The black spots in the zisha are actually bits of iron that melted in the firing.)

Of course, the spout is also important in tea brewing. While it is nice to have a built-in filter, we have found that a single hole makes for a smoother pour and brighter tea. The filter separates the tea, breaking its structure. Also, you can learn and then practice how to add the leaves in a way that the bits will stay in the pot (the bits are important as they add consistency, especially in the early steepings when the larger leaves haven’t yet opened). You simply sandwich the bits between the larger leaves. The spout shape is also important, as it will affect the range of distance the pot pours as well as the speed of the flow. Our favorite spouts are the cannon spouts of *Ju Lun Zhu*, as they afford the greatest control over the distance and flow of tea liquor. Other spouts have a much more limited distance and speed.

These are some of the design features we look for in a good pot. Add some water to a pot you are considering and feel the balance, observe the pour—its distance and speed. Taste the water from it as well. It should be smooth, and better than the water not in the pot in all the ways we have so

often discussed in the Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea. Much of the smooth, soft roundness of the water or tea liquor has to do with the clay, though.

Clay

The clay plays a huge role in the quality of a pot, perhaps more than any other factor. Many times when choosing an antique pot, we have to excuse design flaws, and often forgive aesthetic issues (maybe even chips or cracks), but we do so because the clay of these pots is so much better. This demonstrates how important the clay of a pot is. It is the clay more than anything else that affects the structure and quality of tea liquor.

There are three large families of Yixing clay: *zisha* (紫泥, purple-sand), *hongni* (紅泥, red clays) and *duanni* (段泥, yellow, gray and green clays). It is *zisha* clay that was married to tea all those centuries ago, and *zisha* clay that makes Yixing the “Teapot City” (sometimes also referred to as the “*Zisha* City”). Sometimes, Chinese people

even refer to all Yixingware as “*Zisha*.” Much more than the two other families, *zisha* makes smooth, bright tea. A nice *duanni* pot can be good to have for green, white or yellow teas. *Hongni* pots are often nice for lightly-oxidized oolong, due to the high iron content. However, for most teas, in most situations, it is *zisha* that makes the best tea.

Originally, only *zisha* was used to make teapots. In the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), all teapots were very large and *hongni* cannot be used to make such large pots, as the shape would warp in the kiln. Therefore, only *zisha* was mined for teapots. *Zisha* is a much richer clay, and *hongni/duanni* are both missing or deficient in several of the minerals and compounds found in *zisha* ore.

Clay is the most difficult aspect of teapot purchasing and evaluation these days, though. In the late 1990s, the mines of Yixing were all closed. Most of the ore used to produce Yixing clay comes from the Yellow Dragon or Blue-Green Dragon mountains. All of these mines were closed, and they remain walled in, and locked with a giant wooden door, even to this day.

As a result, genuine Yixing ore and the clay that is processed from it have become scarcer and more expensive. When you put this together with the issue of craftspeople in Yixing maintaining the art of teapot creation while losing the relationship pots have to tea, you have a problem for the tea lover. You see, as potters have focused more and more on form, and less and less on tea brewing, they have begun to seek alternative ore and clay from other regions of Jiangsu and even Anhui to create their pots. To them, Yixingware is much more about the technique than it is about the ore. What makes a teapot Yixingware, they think, is the method used to make it, as well as the style and shape. As long as the pots are similar in color to traditional Yixing ore, they don't mind where it is from. And much of the coloration can be achieved these days by adding iron

oxide, for example. This is a serious issue for the Chajin who is seeking a pot to make fine tea, which is as much or more about the clay composition as it is about the design and craftsmanship.

Almost all of what is sold in the market as "Yixingware" contains no actual Yixing ore. We don't have a statistic, but experts in Yixing have suggested that it is higher than ninety percent. If, as we suggest, and as you should experiment, much of what has made Yixingware famous these five centuries, marrying it to Tea, is the effect this clay has on tea liquor—if that is true, then using alternative ores/clays to produce pots in Yixingware shapes will result in teaware that doesn't have the desired effect, which is happening. Very often, we meet tea lovers who ask us if Yixing is all hype. They start out with a porcelain pot, or perhaps another ceramicist's work, and then get

an "Yixing" teapot online or on a trip to China. After returning home, they try the new pot out and find it really is not that different from their other pot. (Some even tell us it is worse!) And this may be true: maybe clays from random places in Jiangsu or Anhui, often blended with powders from all over, aren't as good for tea as porcelain, purion or other kinds of ceramics. But genuine *Zisha* is! It has been for five hundred years.

We hope this highlights how important it is to get a genuine *zisha* pot, made from real ore, mined before the mines were closed. It is this that will change your tea. When it comes to clay, aside from the importance of provenance and choosing *zisha* (for most teas), the longer the ore ferments, the better, and the older the clay is, the better it is for tea. Some potters have asked us why this is the case and we



genuinely do not know. It may seem to make no sense, as the organics in clay are all wiped out in the firing. These skeptics suggest that the greater the fermentation of the ore or clay, the easier it is for the potters to work with, since Yixingware is hand-built, and this is definitely true. More than one potter in Yixing has told us that the older the ore and/or clay, the smoother and more refined it is. This means it will respond to their hands better, resulting in subtle refinement. The mystery we cannot explain is why these pots make better tea clay-wise? We have done experiments with various ages of clay and their effects on tea liquor and found age to be a very prominent factor. In fact, there was some Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) clay offered at auction in the late 1980s. The batch was purchased by a Malaysian teapot collector and several pots were commissioned from

it. And these pots make amazing tea, commanding very high prices amongst tea lovers. The clay was forgotten and found more than a hundred years later. While it is genuinely assumed that the abundance of ore and clay meant that potters of yesteryear fermented theirs much longer than modern times, it is unlikely they did so for that long. And yet, it did affect the tea. It seems clear to us that past masters fermented their clay longer not just because of an abundance, but because doing so made for better clay to work with and also had a pleasant influence on the tea prepared in such pots, which was a far more relevant factor in a pot's overall quality than it is today.

We have also found that the best *Zisha* clays nowadays are unblended, which is called “*Qing Shui Ni* (清水泥).” Using just one ore, from one vein, fermented to produce a single

clay results in better tea. There are many kinds of ore in each family (*zisha*, *hongni* and *duanni*). Long ago, masters were much better at blending ore, not just for aesthetics, but for the effect on tea liquor. Sadly, such secrets are lost now, making pure clay the best option (all things equal).

I have been studying Yixing for many years and am still very much a beginner. It is a deep and vast art, with centuries of history, traditions passed on from master to disciple, and incorporates geology, mining, clay production, teapot making, firing, decoration and appreciation of pots—much more than anyone could learn in a lifetime. There is, therefore, a lot more to choosing a pot than our introduction has covered, but I want to move on to one of the most asked questions, about which pot one should use for which tea and why.



Which Pot for Which Tea

When discussing which pot to use for each kind of tea, we should first discuss a slightly misleading idea that many people who are new to gong-fu tea have, which is that you *must* have one teapot for each kind of tea. Yixingware is unglazed, and has a double-pore structure, which means the pores of the pot absorb the oils of a tea and “season” over time, becoming shinier, more beautiful and filled with tea spirit. It also means that after a long time, and many tea sessions, the pot will be able to transform plain water into smooth, bright and flavorful life—much like drinking tea, without the flavors and aromas. This process is wonderful and joyous; it is one of the great joys of a tea lover, in fact. And this means that you will need one pot for each of the kinds of tea you drink. But it is not necessary. Also, they say that when you put the right tea in the right pot and shower the outside the teapot will glow.

If you have only one pot, it is not necessary to designate it for just one tea. You can use your only pot for all teas. In order to do so, you should follow two guidelines: First, you should be strict about never leaving tea leaves in the pot for any amount of time at all. Clean the pot out immediately after a session. (If you have one pot for each kind of tea, you can leave the tea leaves in the pot and return for a second session later. This helps season the pot, in fact). Secondly, you will not be able to season the pot, but should scour it every six months or so (depending on how much tea you drink). You can follow the scouring guidelines in this issue. Then, as you accumulate pots, you can start to segregate them according to type of tea. After you get a second one, for example, you could have one for light teas (like lightly-oxidized oolong or young sheng puerh) and one for dark teas (like traditionally-processed oolong or shou puerh).

In our tradition, we practice not being hoarders, collecting too many pots that one will never use. Many of the pots that are just sitting on your shelf collecting dust could be a treasure to a beginning tea lover—one they will honor by caring for it with deep respect and using it every day. A fine teapot is meant to be used.

Just as tea trees (even wild ones) do not thrive as well when people don't visit them, offer prayers and prune their leaves, in the same way, a pot won't glow without the love of a friend and beautiful tea flowing through it. For this reason, we practice only using a maximum of fifteen pots, as shown in the chart. Most people will really only need around ten, as the extra five are more for those serving lots of tea in many different situations.

If you stick to the “fifteen pot” principle, you will not only stop yourself from unnecessary spending or from collecting pots you yourself will never use, you will also improve your collection over time, because every time you go teapot shopping, you will have to ask yourself, “Which of my fifteen pots will this one replace?” Then, if it doesn't perform one of the fifteen roles better than the pot you already have, you will leave it in the store for another Chajin. If it does perform better in some way, then you can bring it home, and either give the old one away to a friend or sell it to help pay for the new one. In this way, your entire collection will slowly improve, developing into a better and more refined Yixing tea gathering!

十五寶

一生的幸福



The Fifteen Gongfu Pots

- 1) Young Sheng Puerh
- 2) Shou Puerh
- 3) Aged Sheng Puerh
- 4) Liu Bao and Black Tea
- 5) Aged Oolong
- 6) Lightly-Oxidized Oolong
- 7) Traditionally-Processed Oolong
- 8) Wuyi Cliff Tea
- 9) Gongfu Red Tea
- 10) Light Teas: White, Green & Yellow

-Extras-

- 11) Miscellaneous 1: Medium-Large (Light Teas)
- 12) Miscellaneous 2: Medium-Large (Dark Teas)
- 13) Miscellaneous 3: Large Pot (Light Teas)
- 14) Miscellaneous 4: Large Pot (Dark Teas)
- 15) Miscellaneous 5: Used as Pitcher (a.k.a. "Pitcher Pot")



Yixing Poems

茶 What were the untold riches he spoke of?
Does the old rascal watch us now?
Perhaps escaping time
Offered the old codger
A glimpse of all the cups shared,
Friendships toasted,
And loves vowed true.
Maybe he watches us now,
From just past the fuzzy rim
Of an upturned pot,
Grinning ear to ear
With the satisfaction
Of the last few drops.

茶 Earth-polished gems
Bestowed upon the Queen of Trees
In an offering of love beyond time
A Tribute paid in
Clay and Leaf from the same source
Heaven, Earth and the Heart

茶 The spirit sought a home,
A body to hold the sacred waters:
An earthen home,
Made of the same elements
From which She grew,
To Shine in Her glory.
Just as She called to the shamans,
Long before there was a pot,
Offering to guide the human soul home,
So did She appear before these,
In the guise of an old immortal,
Offering untold riches in the hills,
Creating the way for the
Earthen sand to become
A teapot-shaped altar,
Beginning an unending stream of joy
That leads over the horizon
And back to this very cup.

茶有一個形

茶湯變成壺

Shape Revisited: Types of Tea

The shape does play a role in which pot is useful for which kind of tea. This is, however, a very deep topic that extends beyond the scope of this introductory article. There are a lot of nuances when it comes to shape, and we feel that the clay type and purity have a much greater bearing on tea liquor than the shape (which is not to say that shape is not important). As we mentioned above, a round body that opens up a bit in the middle is always the ideal shape for all kinds of tea, so if you are looking for a general pot to use with all teas, or aren't sure about what shape to use, always look for a nice round body that expands slightly in the middle, as it will produce the best tea.

In general, young sheng puerh is very nice in pots that are wide with a flat lid. It is nice to use a bigger pot for all compressed teas, leaving extra room for the leaves to open more. The spout should also not be restricted, as puerh needs to be decanted quickly—moments more can make the tea too bitter and/or astringent.

Ball-shaped oolongs do best in a perfectly round pot. They also need lots of room to open up, and need to be nursed for the first few steepings so that they don't roll over the spout side and open unevenly. We want all the balls to open simultaneously in a symphony of fragrance and Qi. Gentle and round pots can help facilitate this.

Striped oolongs, like Wuyi Cliff Tea, are best in flat, wide pots with huge openings. These leaves are large and brittle, so a large opening makes it easy to get them in the pot without breaking them. The wide, flat shape means the leaves can open uniformly and will not move too much.

Red teas do best in thick-walled, tall pots. Red tea is often best brewed for long periods, and these tall, thick pots conserve heat and allow the leaves to float, opening uniformly and providing a smooth liquor that is bright and sweet.

When brewing light teas gongfu, like white, green or yellow, we like a small *duanni* pot that is flatter. These teas are more about fragrance, and are

often served at lower temperature, so the heat preservation and smoothness of good *zisha* is less important. A delicate, thin *hongni* pot from good clay can be used to brew very nice lightly-oxidized oolong as well. For this, a round pot would, of course, be ideal for ball-shaped examples, and a wide, flat pot with a large opening would be good for Baozhong.

Our favorite shape is *Ju Lun Zhu*, as we have often repeated. It is perfect for all kinds of tea, with a round body, thick walls and a cannon spout for maximum control of pouring speed and distance. These pots work well with every kind of tea, and we love the simple, humble and rustic aesthetic of them as well.

If you read the "Styles of Yixing Teapots" article beginning on page 61, we offer some more guidance for shape and tea. We love using a Si Ting pot, for example, for delicate Taiwanese oolong, especially when it is lightly oxidized; or a Meng Chen Pear pot for Wuyi Cliff Tea, since it is flat, with a large mouth.





Antique Yixingware

In the June issue of this year, I discussed several reasons why we love antique teaware. Back when I first started drinking tea, we didn't know any modern teapot makers who loved drinking tea and were interested in the relationship between clay and tea liquor. This meant we had to buy antique pots, which are more expensive, you cannot choose the shape and style and there is always the danger of buying a fake one. It takes time to learn which pot is authentic and which isn't—you have to touch lots of pots. I was fortunate to have a great teacher to show me how to identify authentic pots and who even gave me my first Qing Dynasty pot to use as a comparison when shopping (I often took it out with me, just in case). Nowadays, we are lucky to have Masters Zhou and Chen in our lives, making pots in any shape we want for affordable prices, and, most importantly, using good, authentic clay that makes great tea. (And for teaching us!)

Still, there is a magic in antique pots. The producers of them devoted their whole lives to the creation of Yixingware, living much simpler and more concentrated lives without all of the distractions of modern living. I wrote about how the craft has not been lost, but the relationship to tea has. In the June article, I also mentioned how the clean living and lifelong devotion of past masters improved their work. A couple of you asked me if maybe the quality of pots back then was as varied as now and then only the good ones survived to the present. Are the antique pots we seek the best of their time? Actually, this is not true. The best pots, made by masters, are very expensive, as they are desired by Yixing collectors. Chajin like myself much prefer the everyday, ordinary wares from that time—the simple, rustic pots that have been used ever since. We like the wares that the potters took home because they were too flawed to sell

or the pots that ordinary people used day in and day out, not the nice pots commissioned for wealthy people, or at least collected by wealthy businessmen today. Simple antique pots, often with slight chips in the lid, that were made for ordinary people to use every day are cheaper than other antiques and make better tea. There is also the magic of owning a pot that has been held by many Chajin—generations of adoration and leaves and water meeting over and again in these gorgeous friends. A pot that has been loved and used, cared for enough to survive the journey through time, glows with a magic all its own. You feel honored to be a part of this sacred lineage of stewards of the pot!

Teaware is the earth element in the alchemy of tea. When it is fired, though, it turns completely to fire—all the atoms moving and rolling around in the extreme heat of the kiln. Therefore, the older the pot is, the further



it gets from its firing, the more it returns to earth element, settling back down into the configuration of metals and minerals it held when it was in the ground. Since Yixingware is hand-built, instead of thrown on a wheel, one could say that the overall structure of the pot is closer to the original make-up of the ore than clay which is spun around a wheel.

The final reason why antique pots are so much better is due to the most important factor of a pot, as we have discussed repeatedly: *the clay*. As Yixing craftsmanship has drifted further and further into art, and away from the original ore/clay and its relationship to tea, many arts have been lost. Since the mines closed and most potters have switched to using clay from other regions, the ore-selecting and mining skills have died. Also, the fermentation of the ore and clay-processing secrets that had been cultivated by families for hundreds of years have also been lost.

Master Zhou is trying to experiment with ore fermentation and clay processing to create better clay for tea, but he is doing so alone and without guidance. (It took around five years of trial and error to get to a level of clay that Henry and Master Lin approved of.) The techniques of refining the clay are mostly lost, especially the inner secrets held by lineages, which weren't written down or shared publicly. Finally, the same thing is true of the wood-firing masters who controlled the dragon kilns for centuries. As craftspeople have switched to gas or electric firing, these powerful and elemental kilns have become a tourist destination. They are being fired more and more as wood-firing once again becomes popular, and we hope these techniques will also be further refined in the future.

For all these reasons and more, antique pots are almost always better than modern ones. There are exceptions in both directions, however. If

you are interested in finding an antique Yixing pot, we would recommend treading with great care, as there are a lot of fake pots and you may wind up paying some "tuition" without the guidance of a knowledgeable collector or teacher. But when you do find an authentic pot, you will be rewarded for your efforts!



茶 These are a few of the Center's Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) teapots. The older clay was authentic ore from the best mines. In those days, ore was plentiful and cheap, so teapot makers could choose from the purest and best veins. Then the ore was hand-ground or oxen-ground. If you don't think human labor makes a difference, try grinding some spices by hand in a mortar and pestle or hand-grind some hummus. Of course, the makers of these pots were also tea lovers, who understood the process of tea brewing and were aiming to create pots that would make great tea. This was as primary as the aesthetic craftsmanship of the pot. Also, as we spoke of earlier, the centuries since firing have returned these pieces to the Earth.



STYLES OF YIXING TEAPOTS

If you include all the artistic pieces and nuances of classical shapes, there are literally thousands of kinds of Yixing pots! Each of the classical styles has been adapted and creatively sculpted into subtle shades of the original, creating a vast array of shapes within each “shape.” The classical styles can therefore be thought of as families of pots, since students learn by first replicating the masters of old, then adapting the old masters’ pots and finally creating their own masterpieces, which will be studied down through the ages.

One of the wonderful aspects of Asian art that we appreciate is the fact that for centuries masters created beautiful works of art without any need to attach their names to the pieces. Instead, they would honor their heritage by stamping the names of past masters, especially when the piece they were making was an homage to something created by that master. This trend was certainly informed by Tea, as so many craftsmen in Asia made teaware as part of their craft or art, if not exclusively so. It is in the spirit of tea to be humble and to not desire any fame or credit for one’s service. In our tradition, we always say that we aren’t here to learn to *make* tea, but rather to *serve* Tea. And the “serve Tea” here can have several

meanings. Of course, this means to prepare bowls or cups of tea and share them with people, but it also means to serve Tea Herself, the Nature spirit within these leaves. Even in biological terms, we are symbiotic with Tea, as we not only promote the propagation of her offspring, but also teach people to care for the trees in a way that promotes their health and happiness. Serving this healing medicine, and the changes it can facilitate in the human-Nature relationship, is a very ancient practice. And it is out of such service that the need for reward or accreditation was dropped by simple Chajin stamping the names of their masters’ masters onto the bottom of pots. Their reward was in the making of the pot. Wonderfully, this tradition continues today in Yixing, though more of the younger generations of craftspeople are ambitious to make a name for themselves.

There are five basic categories for the styles of Yixing pots, though various authors categorize the styles of pots in different ways. It really is up to each collector to organize his or her own pots. We have chosen these five to simplify things, and have done our best to present you with at least one pot from each of the five categories. As you will see, all our pots are used, stained by serving water, good tea and hours of joy.

Nature Pots (自然壺): These pots are decorated with natural motifs, like butterflies, other insects, bamboo, pine trees, pumpkin-shaped pots, gourd pots and much more.

Geometric Pots (幾何壺): These are hexagonal, square or angled pots. They are influenced by ancient bronzework.

Round Pots (球形壺): These are the best pots for tea brewing, and were originally designed on a purely functional basis—for making great tea.

Quotidian Treasure Pots (日常寶壺): These pots are shaped like everyday objects, like wagon wheels, jars, cups, ladles and other charming elements of daily life, following the time-honored Tea practice of celebrating the ordinary.

Decorative Pots (裝飾壺): These are artistic pots, and are often not very functional, created exclusively, or almost solely, to be viewed rather than used. This type of pot can be carved, glazed, decorated with small sculptures or even be a unique and strange shape. (Technically, many of the Nature pots would also fit into this category.)



Shui Ping (水平)

Called “Balances in Water,” as these pots are supposed to float if they are made perfectly. These are probably the most produced pots in history, made extensively throughout the Republic (1911–1949) and Communist eras (post-1949).



Duo Qiu (掇球)

These “Chopped Ball” teapots are named this because it is supposed to be made from the slices of a perfect orb, cut up and rearranged with skill in various shapes and styles. This style began in the mid-Qing Dynasty, which lasted from 1644 to 1911.



De Zhong (德鐘)



Fang Gu (仿古)



Xian Piao (線瓢)

“Straight Scoop” teapots are styled after other scoop-shaped pots and also influenced by pear-shaped pots, of which there are many. This is a great shape for beginners, as it is useful for all kinds of tea. These pots are also known as “Guava pots (芭樂壺).”



Si Ting (思亭)

This is a specific kind of pear-shaped pot that has been famous for centuries. They are often inscribed “思亭” on the bottom. The long, elegant spout means less room to choose the speed and distance of the pour when decanting, but they sure are gorgeous!



Meng Chen Pear (孟臣梨式)



Xi Shi (西施)

Shi Yiguang (施夷光) is one of the “Four Great Beauties” of China. She is said to have been so beautiful that fish in her pond would gaze at her and forget to swim. This style of pot is designed to resemble her breast. Also, the handle is upside-down.



Court Eunuch (Tai Jian, 太監)

These famous pots date to the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Many variations of this style exist. The name is a bit cheeky, as it refers to the shape of the spout. (Someone obviously had a strong sense of humor.) They are wonderful pots for tea.



Arhat (Luo Han, 羅漢)

This is an “arhat” teapot. Arhats are Buddhist saints. The pot is said to resemble a saint seated in meditation, especially if you cover the handle and spout. These pots date back to the Ming Dynasty and are one of our all-time favorite pots.



Monk's Hat (Seng Mao, 僧帽)

“Monk's Hat” teapots are said to resemble a sacred hat of the time. This style was created by one of the earliest and greatest Yixing masters, Shi Da Bin (時大彬). They aren't easy to shower, so they aren't great for all tea, but they do make nice red tea.



Cow Nose Lotus Seed (Niu Gai Lian Zi, 牛蓋蓮子)



Stone Dipper (Shi Piao, 石瓢)

Shi Piao teapots are named after ladles used in wells. These pots, like many other styles, are celebrations of Quotidian Treasures, the honoring of the ordinary. This shape of pot is great for young sheng puerh, or for serving many guests.



Palace Lamp (Gong Deng, 宮燈)

These common pots have been made in many styles over the centuries. They are often adorned with engravings or carvings to highlight their royal flair. This simple version is made of a decent grade of clay and is good for striped oolong teas, like Dancong or Cliff Tea.



Wish-Fulfilling (Ru Yi, 如意)



Pine Tree (Song Shu, 松樹)



Bottle Gourd (Pao Zun, 匏尊)

This is one of our favorite pots for making tea. This shape makes excellent shou puerh and red tea. The tall, thick walls preserve the heat better than many shapes, producing a thicker and more delicious liquor.



Cang Hexagon (藏六方)

This pot is thus named because “cang” is a homophone with “cang (same word, different sound),” which is when turtles retreat into their shell, which the pot resembles. Turtles hiding in their shells is an old Zen metaphor for meditation.



Upright Ji (Ji Zhi, 汲直)

Chen Man Sheng (陳曼生) read “The Book of Han,” from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). Inside was one story about an official named Ji An (汲黯), who spoke honestly and bluntly to the emperor, demonstrating integrity that was rare in those days. There was an old saying regarding Ji An, “Straight like Ji (汲黯方直).” Inspired by this story, and the uprightness of this ancient noble, Master Chen created this pot. This amazing pot is straight and tall, representing the uprightness of a noble man. These pots can be rare, but if you search, you can find versions of them. They are excellent for preparing red tea, as the tall and thick walls allow for longer steeps, creating a bright and sweet liquor, especially when brewing gongfu red teas.



Remote Springs (You Quan, 悠泉)

This is amongst our all-time favorite teapot shapes, reminiscent of a mountain spring bubbling to the surface and cascading down in clear and pure pools. It is inviting to hold, touch and use to prepare tea. The button even resembles the center of the crystal spring pool where the water rises from.



Han Fang (漢方)

This pot was also created by the great Shi Da Bin. It is based on the bronze works of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). This is one of the more famous shapes of Yixing teapots. We find it makes nice red tea or perhaps shou puerh as well.



Pumpkin Pot (南瓜)

HOW TO HOLD AN YIXING POT

如何持壺

There are as many ways to pick up an Yixing pot as there are hands, but the traditional way of holding a pot will facilitate more fluency, and result in more grace, smoothness and, ultimately, finer, smoother and more patient tea. “Gongfu (功夫)” means mastery through self-discipline. Much of what facilitates mastery in any discipline is the ability to listen. In the case of gongfu tea, this means brewing the tea the way it wants to be brewed, as opposed to the way we want to brew it. Mastery means understanding one’s teaware and the connection they have to the body, flow of Qi and overall smoothness and grace. As we have often said, gongfu tea is broken down into two main skills: If the temperature stays consistent and our movements are slow, smooth and graceful, then the tea releases its essence slowly, smoothly and gracefully, without any disturbances or shocks. Tea trees thrive in environments that are quiet, without disturbance, and places that have consistent temperature, water flow and humidity. It should come as no surprise then that we prepare the tea in the way that Nature best produces it: quietly, gently and with consistency. This makes our

tea more patient, smooth, and makes a session flow gracefully, leaving our guests with a nice impression of the tea in all its phases, while also allowing the medicine of the tea to reach the subtle body gently. Holding the pot properly will play a part in the gentleness, gracefulness and smoothness of one’s pour.

One common way that people hold Yixing pots in modern China, which you may have seen, is to insert the index finger through the hole of the handle and then use the thumb on the button/pearl. However, this breaks the flow of Qi at the wrist, and greatly reduces the circular freedom of the wrist and hand, which is necessary in pouring gongfu tea directly into cups. Those who use this technique often do not practice traditional gongfu tea and use a pitcher (*cha hai*, 茶海), which means they require less lateral, circular movement of the pot, since they are only pouring in one place. Though properly holding the pot will influence this type of tea brewing less, we would argue that it still would be better to hold the pot in the traditional way, as this method of using the thumb will still pinch one’s Qi, flexibility and fluency when the liquor reaches the end and the pot needs to be tilted more to release the last of

the tea liquor. You should experiment, of course—experimentation is an essential aspect of developing mastery in tea! Learning to create your own experiments and recording the results will help along the way.

The proper way to hold an Yixing teapot corresponds to all aspects of daily life in China, where these pots were born. An Yixing pot is held the way that chopsticks are—the way that a writing/calligraphy brush is held and even the way a ping pong paddle is held. The bottom two fingers of the strong hand are the support—they hold the bottom of the handle as a foundation for holding the pot up. The thumb and middle finger then pinch the handle as a guide, providing all the structure and give you need to manipulate the pot fluently. The index finger is then placed on the button/pearl of the pot to center it, providing balance and also secondary guidance as you move the pot in circles to decant the tea.

All circular movements in tea are towards the center—clockwise if the left hand is dominant and counter-clockwise if holding the pot with the right hand. Try to use your elbow as the pivot of force that rotates the pot.



茶自倒有如小河淌水

① 緩慢而優雅的動作

茶道

茶



This will create more balance, harmony and, in the end, a smoother pour. Upward and downward movements of the pot are like a phoenix—coming from the wrist and upper hand. We lift the pot from the palm and the two bottom fingers, which are the foundation. To drop, then, the phoenix dips down, with a force that comes from the elbow down and over the hand. This dipping and raising the pot with the elbow and hand will require some skill (*gongfu*) to master, but, as with all things, practice makes perfect.

Gongfu tea is all about mastery and control. Try not to just pick up or hold the pot, but connect with it. In other words, your sense of “self” doesn’t need to end at the handle, which is then

consciously or unconsciously felt to be “other” or just an “object.” Instead, feel the pot as an extension of you. Making nice tea will incorporate the flow of energy (*Qi*) through the body, down the arm and through the pot. Furthermore, try not to dump the liquor out, but rather place it exactly where you wish, as it also is an extension of your energy.

The proper way to hold a pot does not end with the placement of the hand; it actually includes the whole body: our feet should be flat and firmly planted on the ground (or we are seated cross-legged on the ground); our arm should never pinch at the shoulder, which means our arm is lifted too high, clipping *Qi* (the same applies for

the kettle); the circular movements we make should come from the elbow, gently pivoting the whole arm; finally, lifting and lowering the put should come from the opposite movement of the arm—dropping the arm lifts the pot, and vice versa.

Try holding your Yixing pot in different ways and pouring a round of cups. Try to feel how much smoother, more graceful and fluid the traditional method of holding the pot is. It is not by coincidence that all food was eaten with chopsticks held in this way, all writing and painting done with brushes held in this way. Even swords and many other weapons were used in this way. This method, like all things *gongfu* tea, was born out of martial arts, as an

道



aspect of these masters' lifeways. These ancient aspects of Chinese culture were born of practice and harmony with these utensils, and therefore, shouldn't be taken for granted. Still, one should always understand all practical things in tea for oneself—experimenting and practicing until the reasons why things are done become clear in a very real, practical and physical way. Only then will you start developing gongfu. And that process of refinement won't ever end. We find ourselves improving our teapot control even decades later, and will continue to do so as long as we are alive to celebrate a tea practice!



☯ *Even with the eye, you can see which style is natural, free and graceful, and which is constricted and more difficult to maneuver. In your mind, imagine these photographs are moving pictures: Try to see the brewer's arm and wrist moving in circles to decant tea into a row or ring of cups. Then, extend your own hand and try lifting and pouring in these two ways. Which feels more in the flow? Which is more constricted? Are you as fluid up and down with one as you are with the other? Try once more with one of your teapots. Hold the teapot in the off-hand and repeatedly bring the pot to the strong hand and try taking it with both of these methods. Which way is more comfortable? Does it feel like the pot "snaps" into your hand? (Of course, the balance and connection will also have to do with the quality of the pot, but you should still be able to feel the difference in using these two methods of holding the pot. One will connect the pot to the strong hand much more naturally and be softer.) Angle the pot up and down as if you were pouring. You can use the top of the hand to lower the pot and the bottom fingers to raise it. Does it rise and fall more gracefully with one of these methods than the other? Finally, practice both in an actual session to feel the pour. You can start with water and then move on to tea. The ideal in gongfu tea is always to use the instruments in the way they "want" to be used, which is to say, in the way that is natural to their design and function—in harmony with their soul, in other words.*

PURPLE-SAND ART

PART II: ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

考古發現

作者: *Huang Chien Liang* (黃健亮)

Purple-Sand clay teapots have a history of more than five hundred years. In Chinese, they are known as *Zisha Hu* (紫砂壺), with the characters *Zisha* (紫砂) literally meaning “purple sand.” Throughout this history, there have been several main waves in popularity of collecting *Zisha* clay pots, including the late Ming Dynasty, the reign of the Qianlong Emperor during the Qing Dynasty, the late Qing and early Republic, and the present day. The last thirty-odd years from the 1980s until now have seen a particular swell of interest in these pots, which is still going strong. The main reason for these waves, of course, was the circumstances during these periods of history; these were the “golden ages,” when China was flourishing in terms of both culture and economy, resulting in the so-called “fine collections from times of peace and prosperity.”

The past few decades have seen large volumes of archaeological research surface. The current body of research has come a long way since 1937, when Zhang Hong (張虹) and Li Jing-kang (李景康) wrote their *Illustrated Study of Yangxian Sand Teapots* (陽羨紫砂壺圖考), when the existing research was scarce and inaccessible (Yangxian is an old name for Yixing). Even com-

pared to 1982, when Zhan Xunhua (詹勛華) compiled the *Graphic Archive of Yixing Pottery* (宜興陶器圖譜), the material available today is much more plentiful. The abundance of information that we now benefit from is the result of ever-developing science and technology, ease of information sharing, and of course, decades of hard work by archaeologists and historians. We who are fascinated by Purple-Sand clay must be sure to honor all this research. Below is a selection of some of the more eminent research about *Zisha* clay pottery, collated and organized to provide a reference to the existing body of research, so that the various materials may support each other and be useful for future studies.

Discoveries

For a long time, the main source for archaeological research regarding Yixing Purple-Sand clay was a work published in 1984: *A Report on Findings from Ancient Kiln Sites at Yangjiao Mountain, Yixing* (宜興羊角山古窑址調查簡報), in the *Collected Reports on Excavations from China's Ancient Kilns* (中國古代窑址調查發掘報告集). Some years earlier in 1976, while workers from the Yixing

Hongqi Pottery Factory were removing some clay from the mountainside, they discovered an ancient kiln site on Lishu Village's Yangjiao (“Sheep's Horn”) Mountain. This discovery was very significant for shedding light on the origins of Yixing Purple-Sand clay pottery. According to the records, this ancient kiln was a small example of the type known as a Dragon Kiln, measuring around ten meters long and just over a meter wide. In a pile of scrapped pottery next to the kiln, they discovered a great number of rejected pieces of Purple-Sand clay pottery from the period. Most of the unearthed pieces were from various types of teapot, and included spouts, teapot bodies, handles and lids. The scholars at the time classified the pile of fragments by layers, and noticed that some of the teapot spouts were decorated by shaping them into dragons, which was consistent with the style of the Dragon and Tiger vases that were popular in the south during the Song Dynasty. They also discovered some small Song Dynasty bricks in the same spot. From this, they deduced that the earliest pieces were from the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty, with production flourishing during the Southern Song; the latest pieces were produced as recently as the early Ming Dynasty.



- 1) Today, Shu Mountain (蜀山) is the most important archaeological site for purple-sand clay pots (photo provided by the Archaeology team at the Nanjing Museum).
- 2) Spout with molded dragon head, discovered at Yangjiao Mountain in Yixing.
- 3) Various lids and fragments that were unearthed at the Shu Mountain site, all of which were broken shards.

However, there have been differing viewpoints on this in scholarly circles over the years, with some questioning whether the pottery remnants from Yangjiao Mountain provide sufficient evidence to reach these conclusions. For example, historian Mr. Song Boyin (宋伯胤) from the Nanjing Museum writes: “One cannot rely on the similarity between such a small number of pottery shapes and some relics excavated from Northern Song tombs; or on the fact that certain shapes don’t appear after the Southern Song; or that the bricks from the brick pile are relatively small, or that they resemble bricks from the Northern Song. It’s simply not enough evidence.” Following this reasoning, Mr. Song maintains that the only way to get real answers would be to conduct a comprehensive archaeological survey in the area surrounding Yangjiao Mountain, using the proper scientific techniques. Archaeological expert Li Guangning (李廣寧) from Anhui Province also states that “The ancient kiln site at Yangjiao Mountain has never undergone scientific archaeological excavation... it is unsuitable to be cited as archaeological evidence... it’s very hard to confirm that the site dates to any earlier than the reign of the Ming Emperor Jiajing.” Moreover,

as Mr. Li also points out, “Throughout China, more than one thousand Song Dynasty tombs have been excavated, yet to date, none of these tombs have yielded a single Purple-Sand clay teapot!”

Despite this research, it seems that perhaps because the many dynasties’ worth of relics hiding beneath China’s soil are so plentiful and so ancient, China’s archaeological experts haven’t had much time for a newcomer such as Purple-Sand clay, with its mere few hundred years of history. It wasn’t until 2005, nearly thirty years after the Yangjiao Mountain dig, that interest began to pick up. Late that year, with the support of the Taipei Chengyang Foundation, archaeological experts from the Nanjing Museum, the Wuyi City Museum and the local museology department in Yixing joined forces to excavate an area of around 700 square meters, located at two historical sites on the southwest slopes of Shu Mountain (Shu Shan), near Dingshu Village (丁蜀鎮) in Yixing. After two years of work, the archaeologists discovered ten areas with remnants of kilns from different periods. Altogether, they unearthed more than three thousand pottery fragments from various soil strata. The fragments dated from the late Ming Dynasty to the early Republic

of China, and included *Zisha* clay, Junware and other types of everyday pottery. In September 2008, the Nanjing Museum held an exhibition showcasing fragments from the Yangjiao and Shushan digs, entitled *Whispers of Purple Jade: A Collection of Purple-Sand Clay Artifacts*.

The *Whispers of Purple Jade* exhibit also included artifacts excavated from an ancient well site at Jinsha Square in Jintan City, Jiangsu Province. The ceramic fragments excavated from this well dated to as early as the reign of the Ming Emperor Zhengde, and as late as the reign of the last Ming Emperor, Chongzhen. Also unearthed at the same site was a teapot with a hooped handle at the top and a number of pots with spouts for boiling water, all of which were similar in shape and crafting technique to the late Ming pottery found at the Shushan site. The hoop-handled teapot bore a particularly strong resemblance to a similar pot, the Hoop-handled Persimmon Stem-Patterned Pot, found on Majia Mountain in Nanjing, Jiangsu, and dating to the twelfth year of the reign of the Ming Emperor Jiajing (1533). The two pots are so similar in terms of shape, clay and crafting and firing techniques, as to provide evidence that they are from the same period.

Of the *Zisha* implements that have been uncovered from the era of the Zhengde and Jiajing Emperors in the Ming Dynasty, a particularly fine example is the Drum-Shaped Four-handled Purple-Sand Clay Pot found in 1991 at Nanchan Temple in Wuxi, Jiangsu. This pot is heavy and thick-set (similar to the *Gang* style of bowl) with a purplish-brown color, and is made from a fairly coarse, gritty clay. The body of the pot is crafted in a similar fashion to that of the hoop-handled pot found in the Wujing tomb—it is formed from a top and bottom part, with a clearly visible join mark on the inside. It was fired without the use of a saggar (a protective clay case used when firing), so it displays quite a few blemishes caused by flames or debris. Experts speculate that it would have been used to boil water or tea. Along with this pot, the archaeologists also uncovered many pieces of blue-and-white porcelainware and jugs of the sort that were produced for everyday use. The Wujing tomb is a very important site for understanding the history and development of Chinese ceramics.

The earliest use for *Zisha* pots was likely for boiling water or tea. Gradually, they migrated away from the stove and began to be used for brewing tea instead, and so they became more refined. Most of the hoop-handled pots and jugs described above bear the signs of direct contact with flames, which also attests to these circumstances. In 2005 in Jiangsu Province, the site of a Ming Dynasty guard post was excavated on the south side of Datong Street in the city of Xuzhou. A type of Purple-Sand clay “pierced heart” teapot was found at this site, which was used for boiling water during the period from the reign of the Wanli Emperor to that of the Chongzhen Emperor. This type of pot resembles a sidehandle teapot in shape, but with the addition of a sort of hollow spout in the center, coming up from the base of the pot and protruding out the top, passing through the lid. This very scientific design increased the heatable surface area of the pot, thus allowing the water to boil faster. At the Shushan dig, a similar pot was also found in the late Ming to mid-Qing soil stratum. This pot had

a similarly designed steam spout leading out from the side of the pot. From this, we can surmise that these *Zisha* “pierced heart” pots were a common household item in that period, though they are seldom seen nowadays.

You’ll remember that earlier in this article we discussed the Hoop-handled Persimmon Stem-Patterned Pot found at Wujing’s tomb from the Ming Jiajing period, in the city of Nanjing. Wujing (吳經) was a trusted eunuch of the Zhengde Emperor, whose temple name was Ming Wuzong (明武宗) and whose personal name was Zhu Haozhao (朱厚照). Although Wu Jing held as much power as a grand chancellor, he was also spoiled, arrogant and cruel. According to the Ming Dynasty *Yanshan Tangbie Records* (弇山堂別集) by Wang Shizhen (王世貞), after the Jiajing Emperor succeeded to the throne, Wu Jing was sent before the local authorities and was sentenced to be banished to a military outpost in Xiaoling. Despite his fall from grace later in life, after his death the burial items found in his tomb were certainly nothing to be ashamed of.



4) Hoop-handled Persimmon Stem-Patterned Pot from the Ming Jiajing period, discovered at Wujing’s tomb.

5) Jug from the ancient well site in Jintan, Jiangxi.

6) Four-handled Purple-Sand Clay Pot, found at Nanchan Temple in Wuxi, Jiangsu.

7) Hoop-handled teapot from the ancient well site in Jintan, Jiangxi (restored).

8) “Pierced-heart” pot found at the Ming Dynasty guard post in Xuzhou.

9) “Pierced-heart” pot found at the Shushan excavation site.

Numerous artifacts were uncovered in Wujing's tomb, including clay pots, porcelain plates, and more than 200 ceremonial weapons and pottery burial figurines. And, of course, there was the famous Hoop-handled Persimmon Stem-Patterned Pot.

They say that good things come in pairs—in 2002, a pair of Purple-Sand clay pots were unearthed that dated to the same era as the Wu Jing hoop-handled pot! Coincidentally, they were also found at the tomb of a eunuch. According to materials published by the Beijing Department of Cultural Relics and a report entitled *The Ming Dynasty Eunuch Tombs at Beijing University of Industry and Commerce* published by the Beijing Cultural Relic Research Institute, during construction work at the university, three tombs were discovered that turned out to belong to Ming Dynasty imperial eunuchs. According to the report, “A great many artifacts were discovered, including Purple-Sand clay teapots and teacups, and jade belts.” One of the tombs belonged to a eunuch named Zhao Xizhang (趙西漳), who was buried in 1582,

the tenth reigning year of the Wanli Emperor. An inscription found in the burial chamber tells that the owner of the tomb was an imperial eunuch by the name of Zhao Fen, with the style name Lan Gu and also called Xizhang. He was born in 1508, entered the palace at the age of seven, and served four emperors in his lifetime: the Wuzong, Shizong, Muzong and Shenzong Emperors.

The pair of *Zisha* pots, found in a niche in the wall on the west side of Zhao Xizhang's tomb are almost identical, with a straight mouth at the top, sloped shoulder, straight sides and a flat base with a small lip at the bottom. The lids are slightly rounded, with a knob on top. They have short, curved spouts, which are taller than the top of the pot, and tubular “ear-shaped” handles. These pots were made by fashioning the base, body, spout and handle separately, then joining them all together. The body of the pot is formed from a rectangular sheet of clay shaped into a round tube. One can observe small specks of mica throughout the pots, which suggests that the

firing temperature may have been a little too low. Discovered along with the two pots were four Purple-Sand clay teacups of decreasing size, all a reddish-brown color and only 1.1 to 1.5 millimeters thick. Each teacup has a character imprinted into it using a square stamp. The four characters are, in order of biggest to smallest teacup: 礼, 乐, 射, 御, or *li, yue, she, yu*. They mean “rites, music, archery and charioteering”—these represent four of the Six Arts that were important to education and Confucian philosophy in ancient China. Because of their decreasing size, the four cups form a set that can be nested inside each other, with the lips all at the same height. These are the oldest *Zisha* implements that have been discovered to date, and the historical implications of this discovery are worthy of further exploration.

In September 2004, fourteen archaeological groups from throughout China came together to hold an academic forum at Nanjing Museum. They were also holding a large exhibition that was unprecedented for the time, and very educational.



10) *Shi Da Bin's Three-Footed Lid Pot, discovered at the tomb of Lu Weizhen, from the Ming Wanli period.*

11) *The lid of the pot can be turned upside-down and used as a teacup.*

12) *Two fragmented teapot bases stamped with the name “Shi Da Bin (時大彬).”*

13) *Nested Zisha teacup set from Zhao Xizhang's tomb, from the Ming Wanli period. Each cup fits in the one next to it for portability, suggesting that this set was carried. (Photograph provided by the Beijing Cultural Relic Research Institute.)*

It was called “The Beauty of Clay: A joint exhibit of Purple-Sand clay pots from all around China, collected by the Chengyang and Nanjing Museum collections.” The exhibition brought together 29 *Zisha* pots from the Ming and Qing Dynasties, found across seven provinces—Fujian, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Shaanxi, Shanxi and Hebei—and attracted a lot of attention in Purple-Sand clay scholarly circles. It was an unprecedented research opportunity to have so many exemplary Ming and Qing pots all gathered together in one place, with accurate dates and archaeological records. Of special interest were the seven Da Bin named *Zisha* pots—from coarse to refined, they all had a great amount of research value.

A fine example is the Shi Da Bin Three-Footed Lid Pot discovered at the tomb of Lu Weizhen (盧維禎), dating to the 38th year of the Ming Wanli Emperor’s reign (1610). This pot is widely recognized as a genuine article from the workshop of teapot artisan Shi Da Bin (時大彬). The pot dates to only 28 years later than the twin pots from Zhao Xizhang’s tomb. The owner of the tomb, Lu Weizhen (1543–1610), was the vice minister of both the Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Works during the Wanli Emperor’s reign. This Da Bin pot was discovered filled with roasted Wuyi green tea leaves, suggesting that the tomb’s occupant was a tea drinker during his lifetime. The pot is reddish-brown in color, and made of quite finely blended sand. It’s covered all over with tiny, glimmering specks of naturally occurring mica, and from close up you can see a blending of maroon and yellow shades. It was fired to just the right degree, and one can tell that the pot was encased in a saggar throughout firing—apart from the occasional small black fleck from the sand, the surface of the pot is very clean, and there are no imperfections caused by flames.

The pot’s most distinguishing characteristic is its lid, which is clearly based on the shape of a bronze three-footed cauldron called a *ding* (鼎). The beautifully made lid is bowl-shaped with three little “feet” in the shape of half-clouds, allowing it to stand up when removed and set upside-down. When inverted in this way, the lid serves as a teacup; although the bowl-shaped

part of the lid is not deep, its vertical sides mean that it can hold a suitable amount of tea. Due to the addition of feet, the lid doesn’t have a knob on top, and since it can be used as a cup, it doesn’t have any holes to let the steam escape. Now, one might think this would be a problem, but this Da Bin pot is designed for enjoying tea for one in quiet solitude—so, once the lid has been removed to use as one’s teacup, what need is there for steam holes? It’s very clever! Ming writer Feng Kebin (馮可賓) put it thus in his *Notes on Tea* (茶箋): “Small teapots are the most valuable; to each person, a teapot. Let each pour and drink for himself; in this way, the greatest delight will be found. Why? Because with a small pot, the fragrance will not dissipate, and the flavor will not be diminished.”

From this we can see that this Shi Da Bin pot is not only beautifully made, but also forms an innovative and practical response to the needs of individual tea drinkers. In the center of the rounded lid there is a very small bump, invisible to the eye but detectable by touch. It’s in the place where a knob would usually be, and is a trace left by the potters wheel used to make the round lid. Because of the physical “memory” of the clay, this small trace has remained after firing. On the spout, one can see a slightly protruding line down the center, and by looking into the spout, this line is also visible at its base, which suggests that the whole spout was molded in two halves, and then the left and right sides were joined together. This mold line is neat and subtle, taking a flaw and turning it into a feature, and giving the spout a character of its own. It really displays the fine craftsmanship and aesthetic of Da Bin. The base is made differently than usual; it has a rounded clay lip that echoes the curve of the lid.

When I was attending the 2004 Clay Teapot Academic Forum, I saw two fragmented teapot bases displayed by Mr. Zhang Pusheng from the Nanjing Museum that were of a very similar quality and also had the Shi Da Bin name stamped into the base. In terms of shape and craftsmanship, they were very similar to the three-footed lid pot. In addition, there’s a Shi Da Bin straight-necked round teapot that has been passed down as a family heirloom, which also has a very similarly

shaped base. Does this, then, suggest that there is some connection between these pots? Or does it simply reflect a trend in teapot-crafting techniques in the late Ming? This is certainly worthy of further exploration.

Da Bin pots have always been the main focus of study for *Zisha* scholars. In addition to the pots in the Clay Teapot Academic Forum exhibition, there’s also another Da Bin pot that’s often overlooked: the Da Bin Melon-Shaped Purple-Sand Clay Pot with Chrysanthemum Decoration, housed in the Liuzhou Museum collection. This pot is purplish-brown in color, made from coarse sand, and the belly of the pot is formed into rounded chrysanthemum-petal shapes. The base and lid are both shaped like chrysanthemum flowers, with a chrysanthemum bud-shaped knob topping the lid like a jewel. On one of the sections, the Da Bin name is engraved in the clay. The National Cultural Artifact Classification Group, directed by Mr. Geng Baochang (耿寶昌), has classified this pot as a First-Class Artifact. Very early in the history of Chinese pottery, we saw *jin wen* (筋紋) pots shaped like lotus flowers begin to appear, thanks to the influence of Buddhism, and from historical documents we know that Yixing Purple-Sand clay pots in this shape were also around from the beginnings of Yixingware in the mid-to late Ming Dynasty. According to the first volume of the late Ming *Yangxian Teapot Series* (陽羨茗壺系) by Zhou Gaoqi (周高起), “Master Dong Han (董翰), also known as Hou Xi (後溪), has begun to make flower-shaped pots, which require a lot of skill to craft.” Not long afterwards, masters such as Shi Da Bin and Xu Youquan (徐友泉) also made flower-shaped pots. As recorded in *Yangxian Pottery* (陽羨陶說) by Zhang Yanchang (張燕昌): “Government officials and nobles are very fond of drinking tea. I tried a little Shi Da Bin pot, shaped like a water caltrop flower with eight sections, with the maker’s name on the side. One can easily lift and replace the lid, thus sealing the whole pot.” Personally, I find the chrysanthemum-embellished shape of the Da Bin Melon-Shaped Purple-Sand Clay Pot to be quite unusual, and it certainly merits further research, especially the influence it had on future pots.

As well as the Da Bin pots, the Clay Teapot Academic Forum exhibition offered many other fascinating artifacts. One example is the gorgeous Chen Yongqing “Round Pot,” unearthed at the tomb of Liang Weiben (梁維本) in Hebei Province’s Zhengding County, and dating to 1650, the seventh reign year of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Shunzhi. The body of the pot is made from very finely worked purple clay, and the overall color of the pot is a blend of purplish-brown and yellow. It is perfectly fired with no blemishes, and the surface has a slightly granular effect, with fine yellow-brown speckles, almost like the skin of a pomegranate. This pot was made using a wide array of tools, and is so finely crafted that it is indistinguishable from modern-day Yixing pots; it, no doubt, represents the pinnacle of craftsmanship in the late Ming and early Qing. On the base, four characters are engraved that read “Made by Chen Yongqing (陳用卿制).” The neat, evenly shaped characters are laid out pleasingly in two rows; the knife-strokes are clearly defined and have a vigorous quality. In another volume of the *Yangxian*

Teapot Series, Zhou Gaoqi mentions the master craftsman Chen Yongqing: “He makes many finely crafted shapes, like lotus seeds, round water kettles, alms bowls and round balls. They are perfectly round, without using a compass, and are very beautifully decorated. The maker’s signature is in the style of Zhong Taifu’s script; the master foregoes the clumsiness of ink, and instead carves his mark with a knife.” (Zhong Taifu, also known as Zhong Yao, is a calligrapher from the Three Kingdoms period credited with developing the “standard” style of Chinese script, known as Kaishu, which is still used today). We also have this record in the *Essay on Yangxian Teapots* (陽羨茗壺賦) by Wu Meiding (吳梅鼎): “Everyone says that Yongqing’s decorations are richer and finer than any other.” The Chen Yongqing “Round Pot” fits these descriptions very well: It is perfectly round, finely crafted and of excellent quality, with exquisite decorations; the characters in the craftsman’s signature really do resemble the calligraphy of Zhong Yao, and are carved with a knife. Judging from this, we can infer that the round

pot discovered in Liang Weiben’s tomb is indeed a genuine Chen Yongqing piece.

From this research, it becomes clear that by the late Ming Dynasty, the craft of Purple-Sand clay teaware had already reached maturity, and master craftsmen like Shi Da Bin and Chen Yongqing had attained a level of skill and artisanship that was equal to that of today’s artisans. So, when considering the development of *Zisha* pots from the standpoint of crafting techniques, it’s true that one can see an overall increase in skill level throughout history; however, it’s also worth noticing that every now and then, throughout history, a truly masterful craftsman has created a design so outstanding and ahead of its time that it breaks this pattern altogether, and forges an entirely new path in the long journey of Yixing Purple-Sand. From purely utilitarian works to functional art, Yixingware has achieved the pleasant blend of art and craft, form and function, more than any other ceramic tradition. The craft of Yixing truly does combine and harmonize the Heavenly with the Earthly realms!



Above: Da Bin Melon-shaped Purple-sand Clay Pot with Chrysanthemum Decoration, from the Liuzhou Museum collection (photograph by Mr. Zhi Hu, 執壺).

Below: Chen Yongqing “Round Pot” from the tomb of Liang Weiben, from the Qing Shunzhi period.



EARLY TO LATE QING DISCOVERIES

清初至清末的考古發現

The biggest event in the field of *Zisha* in recent years was the excavation of the old kiln site at Shushan. It was the largest excavation of Purple-Sand clay in history, and the soil strata uncovered in the dig spanned more than 300 years, from the late Ming Dynasty until 1966. It has provided an important foundation for determining the time period of Yixing clay ware for scholars both present and future.

The unique nature of the finds at Shushan deserve a special mention; most of the artifacts unearthed there were fragments of pots rejected by the kiln workers over the years and cast aside into piles of “seconds” beside each dragon kiln. These layers of failed pots give us an insight into the habits of the ancient potters—they were careful and fastidious workers; since the pots had quite a high market value, the craftspeople upheld high standards of quality during firing. In Zhou Gaoqi’s late Ming *Yangxian Teapot Series*, the author writes: “For the finished piece to become elegant, it must be fired for a long time. Five or six pieces of pottery are put in the kiln and sealed up tightly. At the beginning, the pots may crack and damage the glaze; if the pot is fired too long, it will become too ‘old’ and will lose its aesthetic; if it’s under-fired, it will be too ‘young,’ and the sand will remain coarse and unrefined.” Because the potters were so careful, the rate of failure in firing the pots was quite low. If a pot was rejected, it would be thrown into a convenient pile beside the kiln, to avoid the possibility of the pot being copied. Here’s an example of Li Dou (李鬥) talking about master potter Shi Da Bin, excerpted from the *Yangzhou Pleasure Boat Journals* (揚州畫舫錄): “While the pot was in the flames, he would wait attentively to take it out. If it turned out fine and elegant, he would crow with pride; but if he was not satisfied with it, he would smash it at once. Sometimes he would only keep one pot for every ten he broke. Every pot that was deemed unsatisfactory was smashed.” According to this account, then, among the

tens of thousands of pottery fragments excavated at the Shushan kiln site, it may be possible to identify some pieces of works by the great masters—but it would certainly require a generous dose of serendipity!

Even so, the piles of fragments unearthed at Shushan have a wealth of information to divulge, and are worthy of further investigation. A couple of interesting examples are the Damaged Sprinkled-sand Pot found in the early to mid-Qing stratum at the Shushan excavation site, which is identical to a surviving pot that has been passed down as a family heirloom, the Large Sprinkled-Sand Double Hoop-handled Pot. In addition, another damaged cylindrical pot was discovered, whose shape and crafting techniques are strikingly similar to those of the Cylindrical Purple-Sand Clay Pot from the Chengyang Foundation collection that was imported to Sweden prior to 1785. The inlaid metal ornamentation that can be seen on this double hoop-handled pot was added after it arrived in Sweden; from the inscription on the metal handle, we learn that the metal ornamentation was added in 1785 in Stockholm, by a silversmith named Peter Johan Ljungstedt.

From the end of 1997 to the early spring of 1998, the Tangcheng Archaeological Group carried out two excavations in the old part of Xuzhou city, on the south side of Da Dongmen Street. During the excavation, they cleared out six ancient wells from the Qing Dynasty soil strata, unearthing a significant number of blue-and-white porcelain cups and plates, along with several dozen *Zisha* pots, soup spoons and other implements. Of these, around ten of the Purple-Sand clay pots were discovered more or less intact. According to Li Jiuhai (李久海), the director of the Yangzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, an analysis of the blue-and-white porcelain indicates that the artifacts found there span a long period during the Qing Dynasty, from the reign of the Kangxi Emperor to that of the Jiaqing

Emperor. The evidence suggests that the site is probably the remnants of a Qing Dynasty tea house.

This group of pots are mostly quite practical in shape: round, with straight spouts. The bodies of the pots mostly have sand mixed into the clay, and display a variety of colors, including reddish-brown, vermilion red, dark brown, and even black or the pale yellow of osmanthus flowers. Several of the pots carry inscriptions in standard *Kaishu* (楷書) script, reading “*Yu Xia* (玉峽)” or “Jade Gorge,” and “*Yu Xia Quan* (玉峽泉),” “Jade Gorge Spring.” Because most of the pots have lost their lids, only one remains with a square seal stamped onto the bottom in relief, with characters of the *Zhuanshu* (篆書) seal script style. The seal reads “Yuan Zhang (元章),” “Original Seal.” There’s another spherical short-handled pot that also shows traces of the square maker’s seal, but the characters are hard to distinguish. There are also two four-sided pots that bear the words “Made by Jing Xi (荆溪所制).” It’s worth noting that a number of *Zisha* pots bearing this same inscription on the lids were found on the wreck of the *Tek Sing*, which sank in the twelfth month of the first year of the Daoguang Emperor’s reign. Although the seal on the two sets of pots was not imprinted using exactly the same wooden stamp, the style of the *Zhuanshu* characters is similar enough to verify the authenticity of the two pots.

The Yangzhou Archaeological team also made a noteworthy discovery on a construction site at the Yangzhou Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital. It was a lidded Purple-Sand clay bowl that bears a round and a square seal beneath the lid, reading “Jing Xi (荆溪)” and “Made by Zhang Junde (張君德制).” It is finely crafted, with an elegant round shape. Coincidentally, an identical lidded *Zisha* bowl with the same seal was displayed at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum in late 1977. It came from the collection of Laurence Sickman and appeared in an exhibition entitled “I-Hsing Ware,”



Shushan excavation pieces and “Large Sprinkled-Sand Double Hoop-handled Pot” from the site.

curated by Ms. Terse Tse Bartholomew (謝瑞華). There are a few scattered records of Zhang Junde, which indicate that he was a Qing Dynasty potter who worked with Purple-Sand clay during the reigns of the Yongzheng and Qianlong Emperors. Among the red clay or *zhuni* (朱泥) pots, there’s a pot bearing the mark “Junde,” with a wide belly and a curved spout, that is commonly known as the “Junde Pot.” The *Illustrated Study of Yangxian Sand Teapots* (陽羨砂壺圖考), written by Zhang Hong (張虹) and Li Jingkang (李景康) after the establishment of the Republic of China, contains the following passage: “There is a teapot with very fine craftsmanship, which is inscribed with just two characters in standard Kaishu script: ‘Jun De.’ The Bishan Teapot Museum collection also contains a small red clay Junde pot. It has a double layer of glaze, and is stamped on the bottom with four characters meaning ‘Made during the years of Yongzheng (雍正年制),’ also in Kaishu script.” Could this mean, then, that this Junde is in fact Zhang Junde, and that the vessel came to be used for gongfu tea due to the fame of the artisan who made it? This has yet to be verified with more research.

There are a few surviving *Zisha* pots and tea-leaf canisters that are decorated with colorful scenic paintings. This style of decoration can be seen on pots from the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods of the Qing Dynasty, such as the Wang Lun Pot with Scenic Paintings that was discovered in a tomb from the Qianlong period. Another example is the Jingmei Qingxiang Pot with Scenic Paintings, discovered in Shanxi Province in a tomb dating to the fifth reign year of the Jiaqing Emperor. The Wang Lun pot was discovered in 1959, in a tomb from the reign of the Qianlong Emperor, in Banshan, Hangzhou. The body of the pot is red-brown in color and is shaped into four petal-like segments, with a short, flat-topped spout. The sides are decorated with paintings, and the knob on top of the lid takes the form of two painted peaches. The maker’s stamp appears on the underside of both pot and lid, and features the name Wang Lun (王倫) in *Caoshu* (草書) cursive script. There is also an oval-shaped stamp featuring some indecipherable characters in the Zhuan-shu seal script. Although the Zhejiang Museum has identified the *Caoshu* characters on the bottom of the pot and lid as reading “Wang Lun,” I be-

lieve it’s very likely that these characters were simply an identifying mark commonly used by the artisans who painted the pots, as this mark is very commonly seen on surviving painted *Zisha* pots. So there probably wasn’t an actual person named Wang Lun.

Among the items unearthed in the same tomb were two Purple-Sand clay water pots (used for calligraphy). One of them was the Purple-Sand Clay Many Fruits Pot. Similar “Many Fruits” pots can be seen in various collections, such as the Chinese University of Hong Kong’s Art Museum and the Suzhou Museum. Most of them are signed “Ming Yuan (鳴遠).” From this, we can tell that these water pots featuring fruit and nuts, such as walnuts, peanuts and water chestnuts, had already appeared in the late Qianlong period. Another interesting piece from the Hangzhou tomb is the Purple-Sand Clay River Snail Water Pot. Another pot of this same shape is housed at the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet in France, and bears the inscription “Made in the ninth year of Kangxi’s reign, at the Maoyuan guesthouse,” as well as a small, teapot maker’s stamp with only the character “Yuan (遠).”

Another of these pots resides at the Hong Kong Teaware Museum, again marked with the name “Ming Yuan,” while yet another one is housed at the Nanjing Museum, this time stamped with the characters “Shi Min (石民).” Pei Shimin was a potter working in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s, who produced many copies of Chen Mingyuan’s pieces with exquisite care and craftsmanship, and was widely reputed as “the second Chen Mingyuan.” Evidently, when Master Pei made his Purple-Sand Clay River Snail Pot, he had a solid foundation on which to model his work.

As for the Jingmei Qingxiang Pot with Scenic Paintings that we mentioned earlier, this was discovered in December of 1975, in Shanxi’s Xiangfen County. Scholars believe that the tomb it was found in belonged to Liu Wenhui (劉文虎), who, during his lifetime, served as the prefectural magistrate and was buried in the fifth reign year of the Jiaqing Emperor. It shows no traces of use and was likely a new pot made especially for the burial. The Jingmei Qingxiang name is often seen on red clay gongfu teapots, and the discovery of this pot gives credence to the theory that several known maker’s marks found on these red clay pots date to the late 18th century. As well as Jingmei Qingxiang (競媚清香), these include Jingxi Meiyu (荆溪美玉), Siyan Shexi (肆筵設席), Gao peng Manzuo (高朋滿坐) and Yuzan Huangliu (玉瓚黃流). These names tend toward the poetic, and roughly mean: “Charming Fragrance,” “Jing Creek Fine Jade,” “Four Bamboo Mats Set for a Tea Ceremony,” “Surrounded by Honorable Friends” and “Liquor From a Jade Libation Cup.”

In the history of *Zisha*-ware in the Qing Dynasty, two potters stand out as the most renowned in the field: the Two Chens, namely Chen Mingyuan (陳鳴遠) and Chen Mansheng (陳曼生). Many teapots by the Two Chens survive today, though small misfortunes befell some of the excavated pots. Firstly, let’s take a look at the Chen Mingyuan pots. One example, the Mingyuan Forty-third Year Midsummer Ancient-style Pot, was unearthed at the tomb of Lan Guowei (藍國威) at Chiling township in Zhangpu County, Fujian Province. The tomb dates to 1756, the twenty-third year

of the Qing Qianlong Emperor. Lan Guowei (birth date unknown) sat the Imperial Examination in the sixtieth year of the Kangxi Emperor’s reign and went on to hold a military position in the light cavalry. Also unearthed at his tomb were several other pieces, including a porcelain tea tray decorated with ink paintings of scenery and people, four small white-glazed blue-and-white porcelain teacups decorated with flowers and marked with the name “Ruochen Zhencang (若琛珍藏)” or “Precious Collection,” and a hexagonal tea leaf tin—inside the tin were tea leaves and a slip of paper with the brand name, “Su Xin (素心),” written in ink. Together with the red clay teapot, these items form a full set of implements for a gongfu tea session, which suggests that the occupant of the tomb was a gongfu tea enthusiast. The pot was discovered completely intact, but unfortunately, due to the inattention of the villagers who discovered it, the spout was broken off and lost during the excavation process, which is a pity indeed.

Because this pot is the only one of Chen Mingyuan’s *Zisha* pots to be discovered in a tomb with a definitive date, researchers are quite certain of its age. Because of the inscription on the pot that refers to the “Forty-Third Year Midsummer,” scholars have determined that it was made in 1726, the fourth year of the Yongzheng Emperor’s reign (this was the forty-third year of the sixty-year Chinese calendar cycle). I had the fortune to examine this pot up close during the 2004 Clay Teapot Academic Forum exhibition at the Nanjing Museum. I observed that it was crafted with great skill and care, even and precise, using very fine clay with a silky-smooth texture. When picked up, it felt solid and steady in one’s hand. It was remarkably different from ordinary finely made red clay pots; it truly is a masterpiece worthy of the famed Ming Yuan name. On the other hand, the shape of the pot and style of the maker’s mark are indeed quite a typical example of what one usually sees with red clay gongfu teapots, and Chen Mingyuan was, after all, praised in the annals of Purple-Sand clay as a master craftsman whose pieces were sought at home and abroad. Until more examples of Chen Mingyuan’s work are discovered, we

should perhaps leave some room for consideration as to the pot’s identity.

As for the other of the Two Chens, Chen Mansheng, one of his pots was collected by the Shanghai Museum in Jinshan County in 1977. This is the Purple-Sand Clay Bamboo Joint Pot, which bears the mark “Wan Quan (萬泉),” “Ten Thousand Springs” and is signed with Mansheng’s name. This pot is significantly different from other surviving Mansheng pots, and there are many opinions, both positive and negative, about this pot, all of which contain a kernel of wisdom—so we won’t go further into that here. Another noteworthy teapot was discovered in January of 1986, in Hexia Village, in the Chuzhou District of Huai’an city, Jiangsu. This was the Peng Nian Three-Footed Cauldron Pot, discovered in the tomb of Wang Guangxi (王光熙). The identity of Wang Guangxi is unknown, but from all the other artifacts uncovered in his tomb—a Da Bin brand *Zisha* pot, some white-glazed floral teacups from the kilns at Dehua, cloisonné water pots for calligraphy, and thirty-one different seal stamps, including some made from valuable bloodstone and larderite and decorated with carved lions—we can tell that Mr. Wang was a scholar and a lover of tea.

This Three-Footed Cauldron Pot is a classic example of a Mansheng piece. A fourteen-character inscription is carved into the shoulder of the pot in a free, vigorous script, reading: “With the light of the Tai Ding constellation, one may live to be as old as Zhangcang; this three-footed pot was made by Mansheng.” Tai Ding (台鼎) was the old name of a constellation named after a *Ding* (three-footed cauldron), and is thus a metaphor for the three-footed teapot, and Zhangcang was a historical figure known for living a long life; so in other words, the gist of the poem is that making one’s tea in a good Purple-Sand pot can aid one to live a long life! The bottom of the pot bears two seals, Peng Nian (彭年) and Xiang Heng (香齋); both sets of Zhuanshu seal script characters are stamped in relief. Xiang Heng is Mansheng’s eldest son Baoshan (寶善), also known as Xiao Man (小曼), “Little Man.” According to research by Mr. Huang Zhenhui (黃振輝), the location where this pot

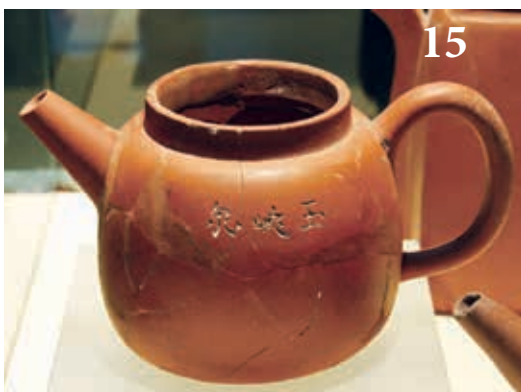
was excavated is the same as the station in Liyang where Mansheng was appointed to oversee river conservancy works; plus, the seals on the pot are in Mansheng's handwriting; from this Mr. Huang infers that this pot dates to the 25th year of the Jiaqing Emperor's reign, at the latest. The Peng Nian indicated on the pot is Yang Pengnian (楊彭年), who was one of the main teapot craftsmen at Mansheng's workshop. He was also considered one of the masters of his generation and many Peng Nian *Zisha* teaware pieces survive today. According to Qian Yong's (錢泳) *Lu Yuan Collection*, as well as being famed for the skill of his family-run workshop in his own era, Peng Nian's works were imitated far and wide for generations to follow. In my opinion, the Peng Nian signature on this Peng Nian Milk Cauldron Pot does indeed appear to be the standard seal of Yang Pengnian, and can verify the pot's identity. To borrow the words of Zhou Gaoqi, it's "sufficient to settle conflicting opinions."

Also worth mentioning here is a pot that was included in *The Elegance of Purple*, which was recently published in Taiwan: the Xiang Heng brand Mansheng "Hundred Patchwork Robes" Pot. This pot was originally from the collection of Qing Dynasty diplomat

Gong Xinzhao (龔心釗); it is accompanied by a burl wood box, which Mr. Gong has carefully labeled by hand on the outside. The lining of the box also bears many stamped collector's seals and a note written on a piece of paper; together they form a very precious set of artifacts. The pot is small and delicate in shape, and its surface is decorated with a subtle blend of yellow-, red- and brown-colored clays, as splendid as the sunrise. The body of the pot is inscribed with these words: "Do not look down upon rough clothing, for beneath it there is wisdom; which pours out with a lively sound. Signed, Mansheng." The particular garment referred to in the inscription is a *shuhe* (衫襖), a type of short jacket made of coarse material, which is a metaphor for the pot; so the sentiment advises us not to judge people (nor teapots!) for their appearance, as wisdom may be found in both tea and the words of others. The underside of the handle is stamped with the Peng Nian seal. The bottom of the pot bears a long Xiang Heng seal, which is identical to the one on the Peng Nian Three-Footed Pot that was found in Wang Guangxi's tomb, so these two pots serve to confirm each other's authenticity and to accurately date the find and all the pieces therein.

In Taiwan, too, some Purple-Sand clay pots have been discovered. In 1999, the National Museum of Natural Sciences undertook an excavation of some ruins at Bantou village (板頭村) in the Hsinkang township in Taiwan's Chiayi County. This area used to be called Bengang (笨港), and was one of the earliest areas established by the Han Chinese, and one of Taiwan's most important and bustling ports during the Qing Dynasty. The ruins at the excavation site were the remnants of the Qing Dynasty local administrative offices of Zhuluo County and Bengang County. Because the nearby Beigang Creek was prone to serious flooding, parts of the town were often submerged or damaged over the years by the changing waters, resulting in a great number of Qing Dynasty artifacts being buried underground in the area. Scholars have determined that "Although we cannot rule out the possibility that some of the pieces may trace back to as early as the Yongzheng Emperor's era, the newer pieces certainly date to no later than the reign of the Jiaqing Emperor."

Among the items excavated were twelve Purple-Sand clay fragments, which are believed to come from four separate teapots. Among these is a bamboo joint pot which,



14. "Osmanthus Flower Sand" straight-spouted round pot found at the Yangzhou site.

15. "Yu Xia Quan" (玉峡泉), "Jade Gorge Spring" brand straight-spouted round pot from the Yangzhou site.

16. Around ten *Zisha* pots were found at the ancient Qing Dynasty well site at Yangzhou (photo provided by the Yangzhou Archaeology team).

after being restored using surviving pots as a reference, bears a striking resemblance to another bamboo joint pot that was excavated from the wreck of the Geldermalsen. The first pot is almost perfectly round in shape; the lid has been lost, but we can speculate based on similar pots that the knob on top may have been shaped like the mythical three-legged golden toad, or like a curved piece of bamboo that is similar to the handle and spout. The second pot is shaped into an elongated, slightly rectangular shape, with curved sides and rounded corners. Another of the broken pieces looks to come from a pomelo-shaped pot, and has part of a line of poetry inscribed on the bottom with the maker's mark (*with some blanks where the characters are missing*):

“A pavilion in the moonlight ____ person; Meng Chen (亭月□□人, 孟臣).” This mark is commonly seen on pots that have been excavated or passed down through the generations in southern Fujian. Other pottery pieces were found with the inscriptions “Made during the years of Qianlong (乾隆年制)” and “Made by Pan Zi ____ (潘子□制).” I believe that the *Zisha* pots unearthed at the Bantou village ruins likely date to before the period of the Qianlong Emperor.

乾
隆
年
制

潘子茶制

茶道



17) Four-sided pot bearing the seal “Made by Jing Xi” (荆溪所制), found at Yangzhou.



18) “Wan Quan (萬泉),” “Ten Thousand Springs” brand bamboo joint pot, signed by Mansheng (From the Shanghai Museum Collection).



19) Pengnian Xiangheng (彭年香齋) Mansheng “Hundred Patchwork Robes” pot from the original collection of Gong Xinzhao.

RECENT DISCOVERIES FROM UNDERWATER EXCAVATIONS

水底探掘發現

Underwater excavation techniques have allowed archaeologists to expand their reach from land to sea; to uncover traces of human civilization from deep beneath the oceans. Over the centuries, these underwater museums have silently guarded their records of human exploits from all sorts of places and time periods: sea transportation, trade missions, cultural exchange, even wars and plundering.

According to the estimates of archaeologists from around the world, there are currently more than 16,000 known shipwrecks with cultural and historical significance scattered throughout the world's oceans, with the majority located in Europe. In the Asian region, the majority of shipwrecks can be found in the oceans of Southeast Asia; according to the research of U.S. historian Dr. Roxanna M. Brown, between 1974 and the present, more than 120 shipwrecks have been discovered in the seas of Southeast Asia. This area is commonly known as the South China Sea, and has had close political and trade ties to China since ancient times. It has also acted as the main thoroughfare for travel between the East and the West, and as a strategic hub for international trade and shipping. Of course, the myriad relics buried in shipwrecks beneath this maritime section of the Silk Road have become precious resources for those who study the history of trade, culture, art and crafts. They form a fascinating microcosm of the economic development of seafaring societies.

Unsurprisingly, the relics discovered in these waters have included a large amount of pottery. This is, of course, partly due to China's famed skill in producing beautiful ceramics, with international demand resulting in a flourishing pottery trade over many generations. However, the other reason is that the physical properties of pottery allow it to weather the conditions of the sea floor for long periods of time and still largely retain its original con-

dition. By studying the pottery contained in shipwrecks, researchers can not only determine things like cargo stacking methods, the vessel's route and the nature of the merchandise, but also make inferences about other cultural and economic circumstances, such as the skill level of the artisans wherever the pottery was produced and the tastes of the overseas market where it was headed.

In recent years, academic circles have achieved some fruitful results in the field of maritime archaeology, with findings proving significant to the study and dating of cultural artifacts. Findings from archaeological excavations in the South China Sea have garnered particular attention and are generally met with great anticipation. As for the pottery discovered in the seas of Southeast Asia in the last few years, there is no shortage of Purple-Sand clay implements; however, since we only have the space of one article, I shall outline some of the finds from several noteworthy shipwrecks in the passages that follow.

The Wanli (萬曆號)

From 2004 to 2005, a company by the name of Nanhai Marine Archaeology Sdn. Bhd., founded by Swedish underwater archaeology expert Sten Sjöstrand, undertook an important excavation in partnership with the Malaysian government. The project was located six nautical miles offshore from the Tanjong Jara Resort, in the province of Terengganu on Malaysia's west coast. They salvaged the wreck of what is believed to be a Portuguese cargo ship dating to the reign of the Ming Emperor Tianqi (around 1625). The ship most likely sank due to an accident en route from Guangzhou to the Malaysian state of Melaka (Malacca). The majority of the recovered artifacts were ceramics destined for overseas sale and dating to the reign of the Ming Emperor Wanli; because of this,

Sjöstrand named the ship "The Wanli." There were very few Purple-Sand clay pots found aboard—the only pieces recovered were three teapot lids and two broken pottery fragments, all from round pots. One of the lids features a "pearl" style knob, set like a gem in the middle of a twelve-pointed star shape, which is decorated with a ring of spiral patterns stamped into the clay. These pieces are the earliest known Purple-Sand clay pots to ever be discovered on an underwater excavation site.

The Donggu Bay Wreck

In 2004, a team composed of experts from the National Museum of China's Marine Archaeology department and from thirty other provinces of China including Beijing, Fujian and Guangdong salvaged a wreck in Donggu Bay (冬古灣), on Dongshan Island (東山島), which faces the Taiwan Strait off the coast of Zhangzhou city in southern Fujian. The wreck was an ancient warship from the fleet of military leader Koxinga (鄭成功) who fought for the Ming resistance against the incoming Qing Dynasty. Dongshan Island was one of Koxinga's main military bases. Among the artifacts recovered from the wreck was a round, flat-lidded red clay teapot. On the bottom is a round seal in Zhuan-shu seal script that reads "*zhuang yuan jidi* (狀元及第)," which literally means "first place in the imperial examination." According to archaeologists, this ship dates to around 1676, the fifteenth reign year of the Emperor Kangxi.

The Oosterland

In 1991, a team assembled by the University of Cape Town, South Africa, began to dredge the wreck of the Oosterland in Cape Town's Table Bay. The Oosterland belonged to the Dutch

East India Company and sank in 1697, the 36th year of the Emperor Kangxi's reign. The artifacts uncovered include six entire Purple-Sand clay teapots destined for the overseas market and several dozen fragments. This group of teapots has two distinguishing characteristics. The first is that the six intact teapots all bear seals identical in style to those found on pots intended for the local Chinese market; however, some of the pots are decorated with auspicious patterns molded onto the surface, which was obviously intended to cater especially to Western markets.

The Geldermalsen

In 1985 United Sub Sea Services, headed by British-born Australian resident Michael Hatcher, discovered and dredged the wreck of this Dutch East India Company ship, which sank in January 1752 (the twelfth month of the Qianlong Emperor's sixteenth reign year). The artifacts uncovered from the Geldermalsen included more than 150,000 pieces of blue-and-white porcelain, 125 gold ingots weighing 750 grams apiece and about ten Yixing Purple-Sand clay teapots. Some of these teapots went to the collection of Hong Kong's Flagstaff House Museum

of Tea Ware; those pots are likely familiar to Purple-Sand clay enthusiasts in Taiwan and mainland China. Among them is a six-sided pot, whose lid is ornamented with a lion holding a ball, a shape that was also noticed among the damaged pots found at the Shushan excavation in Yixing discussed earlier in this article. So it seems that this style of pot was popular both in China and abroad during the Qianlong era.

The lion-shaped knobs on these pots were usually formed by using a wooden mold to create the basic shape, then adding carved details afterwards. On the finer examples, the artists have really captured the details of the little lion's musculature and shaggy coat, right down to the delicately patterned ball that jingles when shaken. There's a charming innocence about them, and they were very popular on the market, with a great number being transported to Europe. The spout of the six-sided pot from the Geldermalsen is a "triple-bend spout (三灣流)" formed from four adjoined pieces. The surface of the handle is also four-sided, and features a small knob on the upper edge. The reason for the knob is that this shape of pot is very heavy—the lid, in particular, uses more clay than usual and is prone to toppling off when the tea is poured, which is why one sees

quite a few pots where the lion has lost its ball. So, the addition of this small knob on the handle helps the pourer to hold the pot steady. This design feature has been noted on silver and gold pots dating back as early as the Tang Dynasty.

Another of the finds was a pear-shaped red clay pot, which is the only gongfu teapot discovered on the Geldermalsen. However, the lid is a little small and is suspected not to be this pot's original lid, which implies that there were other pots of this shape on board. The maker's mark on the bottom is carved rather than stamped, and reads "Yu Xiang Zhai (玉香齋)," or "House of Fragrant Jade." There is no other record of this mark, but there is another known pear-shaped pot which bears a similar mark in the same carved handwriting, namely "Yu Zhen Zhai (玉珍齋)" or "House of Precious Jade," so it appears likely that these two pots are related.

The Tek Sing (泰興號)

In 1999, Hatcher discovered another wreck, this time in the waters off the northern coast of Java: The Tek Sing, which sank in the twelfth month of the Daoguang Emperor's



明月松間照

first year in power (January 1822 on the Gregorian calendar). Discovered on the ship were tens of thousands of ceramics and gongfu teaware pieces, among which were two to three hundred Purple-Sand clay teapots, mostly red clay or *zhuni* (朱泥) gongfu teapots, obviously intended to be sold to the Chinese community in Southeast Asia. There are as many as ten different shapes of pot, spanning all the main types of gongfu teapot. In terms of shape, they all belong to the basic category of round pots; the spouts are mainly of the “single-bend (一灣流)” and straight variety, which are the most efficient for pouring tea. Only a few of them, such as the *Si Ting* (思亭) pot, feature the traditional “double-bend (二灣流)” shape of spout. The handles are mostly thick at the top and thinner near the bottom, round both inside and out, with a visible joint where they meet the body of the pot. The majority of the lids are of the “placed lid” or *yagai* (壓蓋) shape, where the lid has a slight outer lip of the same diameter as the lip of the opening, so that the lip sits directly on top of the teapot mouth when placed there. Second most common is the “cut-off lid,” or *jiegai* (截蓋), which has a curve that smoothly follows the curve of the rest of the pot, so that it looks like the teapot and lid

were originally one sphere with a line cut around to remove the lid. Finally, the least common is the “inlaid” style *qian'gai* lid (嵌蓋), where the lid is inset to be completely level with the top of the opening. The knobs on top tend to be shaped like a miniature version of the pot itself, the top echoing the bottom; this is a traditional design concept of Yixing pots. The teapot bases are mainly of the “circular foot (*quanzu*, 圈足)” and “false circular foot (*jia quanzu*, 假圈足)” styles, with just one pomelo-shaped pot that has a concave base, or *yina di* (一捺底). From the inside, one can see that these pots were fashioned according to the traditional “cylindrical body” or “*da shentong* (打身筒)” technique, where the clay is first formed into a tube. Although the pots have been worked using pottery tools, there are no obvious tool marks; there is a single steam hole in the knob of each lid, which forms an internal trumpet shape, narrow on the outside and wide toward the center of the pot.

The pots are largely made from red *zhuni* (朱泥) clay, with the occasional *zini* (紫泥) purple clay pot (these colors of clay all belong to the general category of “*Zisha*,” Purple-Sand clay—as mentioned earlier in this article, despite its name, *Zisha* clay can display several different colors, ranging

from reds and purples to dark brown, black and pale yellow-green). Overall, the crafting techniques are completely consistent with those of the red clay teapots found in Qing Dynasty tombs across southern Fujian in the last twenty years. They are all from Yixing and are typical examples of classic gongfu teapots. Most of the teapot bases are inscribed with lines of poetry, using a bamboo or metal knife, and are stamped with a seal bearing the raised characters “Made by Meng Chen (孟臣制) in *Xingshu* (行書)” in running script. Some of the pots bear a seal consisting of seal-script characters with no border, imprinted using a wooden stamp, such as the one pictured here, which reads “Moonlight shines among the pine trees; made by Meng Chen (明月松間照; 孟臣制).” This same mark has also been found on pots unearthed in Minnan, southern Fujian.

Unique among the pots found on the *Tek Sing* was an unusually large *Zisha* pot measuring 18.5 centimeters high and 32 centimeters wide; it was probably a personal possession of one of the passengers or crew members. Despite the ocean deposits that have built up on the surface, one can still observe that this pot is made from fine purple clay, and the overall shape has a natural sense of elegance.



20. Purple-sand clay fragments found on the *Wanli* (photo provided by the Chengyang Foundation).

21. Remnant of a six-sided lion pot from the *Shushan* excavation (photo provided by the Nanjing Museum archaeology team).

22. Six-sided pot topped with a lion holding a ball, found on the *Geldermalsen* (From the Hong Kong Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware Collection).

23) *Zisha* pots from the *Oosterland* designed for the overseas market.

Although the relevant records do not specify the brand name of this pot, from what we know of similar surviving pots, we can infer that this one very likely has the maker's name stamped on the bottom, and we even have a good idea of whose name it is: one of the potters from the Shao (邵) clan, of whom there were several in Yixing, including Shao Hengyu (邵亨裕), Shao Daheng (邵大亨), Shao Xumao (邵旭茂) and Shao Youlan (邵友蘭), all masters working from the Ming to Qing period. Most known pots of this design are large ones with a capacity of two to three liters, and generally bear the name "Jing Xi" ("Jing Creek") along with the potter's name, most commonly "Jing Xi, Shao Yuanxiang (荆溪 邵元祥)," "Jing Xi, Shao Yumi (荆溪 邵旭茂)" and "Jing Xi, Shao Xinglong (荆溪 邵形龍)." Though they vary in quality, these teapots are largely similar in shape; they are mostly sidehandle pots, though there is an occasional hoop-handled pot, too. The main characteristics of these pots are their wide, thin handles, rounded on the outside and flat on the inside; as well as their spouts, which are especially big and wide in the middle, like a crab's claw. Of the thousands of shapes of Yixing pots, this is one of the rarest styles ever found.

The Desaru

In May of 2001, in southeastern Johor, Peninsular Malaysia, some fishermen out in their boat unwittingly came across the wreck of the Desaru, around two nautical miles out from the resort village of Desaru, after which the ship was later named. The wreck was dredged under the direction of Sten Sjöstrand, the same archaeologist who excavated the Wanli, with the permission of the Malaysian government. The ship's cargo included more than 50,000 blue-and-white china spoons along with many other pottery items for daily use, many of which were from Yixing: jars, pots and several hundred Purple-Sand clay teapots. The majority were pear-shaped pots and straight-spouted flat-belly pots, and there was also a *Zisha* tea leaf jar; all of them look to be intended for everyday use. The level of craftsmanship is not particularly high; these appear to be mid-range pots, yet there is something interesting about them: they are made using *Qing Shui* clay (清水泥) and "red-brown" *Hongzong* clay (紅棕泥), commonly used for *Zisha* pots in the Jiangnan region south of the Yangtze River, yet they are still fashioned according to classic gongfu teapot shapes—the pear-shaped

and straight-spouted flat-belly shapes mentioned earlier—and hold a large amount of liquid.

The *Zisha* pots found on the Desaru bear around thirty different maker's marks. Aside from a few that have the traditional Meng Chen mark, there are also the following: "Made by You Yumi (有餘秘制)"; "Made by You Lanjian (友蘭監製)"; "Zhouchun Huitang (周春輝堂)"; "You Yi (友義)"; "Wen Yuan (文元)"; "Tang Po (湯婆)"; "Made by Shao Yuanqi (邵元麒制)"; "Made by Yi Yijian (宜邑蔣制)"; "*chashu xiangwen* (茶熟香溫)," meaning "the gentle fragrance of mature tea"; "*shou* (壽)," meaning "Longevity"; and "*buke sheng duiji xin* (不可生妒忌心)," meaning "One must not have a jealous heart." There are also several maker's marks in the form of decorative auspicious patterns or pictures—this was a common style in the Jiangnan region. In summary, we can surmise that this group of pots are a synthesis of Jiangnan-style Purple-Sand clay teapots and gongfu teapots from Fujian and Guangdong: they combine elements of teapot styles from both regions.

Of particular note is the fact that the teapots found aboard the Desaru



were stored in several dozen Yixing clay jars of varying sizes; the space between the teapots was packed with rice husks and other similar grains to protect the pots. The industry around manufacturing everyday Yixing pottery items has been well-developed since ancient times; there are over 3000 different variations of pots, jars and urns, which were produced in large numbers. It's not really surprising that the crew of the Desaru would use Yixing pottery urns to pack Yixing Purple-Sand teapots; however, this teapot packing method has apparently not been seen on any other shipwrecks. Among the many different pottery jars, there is a batch of Yixing pottery "dragon urns (龍缸)" with raised decorations on the surface. Dragon urns are also known as "four-dan dragons (龍四石)," which refers to their capacity—a dan (石) was a measure of grain equal to ten dou (鬥). Pottery jars were classified according to their capacity, for example a "seven-dan jar" or an "eight-dan jar."

The appliqué style of decoration on these urns is literally called "sticking on flowers, (tie hua, 貼花)," or "piling on flowers, (dui hua, 堆花)." This method uses multi-colored clay produced in Yixing as "ink," allowing the

artist to decorate the surface with flowers, birds, scenery, people and animals. Once the clay is stuck onto the surface of the unfinished pot, it is worked with the thumbs, using five main techniques: pushing, rolling, "walking," pressing and tearing (拓, 搓, 行, 擻, 撕). On the appliqué dragon urns discovered on the Desaru, we see auspicious decorations, such as lions playing with balls, bats and trees, including pine, bamboo and plum blossom. The same subject matter and decoration can also be seen on the Qing Dynasty appliqué dragon urns that people like to collect today. These Yixing dragon urns are an embodiment of cultural values during the Ming and Qing dynasties; all sorts of auspicious motifs appeared again and again in art from all over China, with artists doing their utmost to include symbols of good fortune and happiness. There's a saying that encapsulates this ethos: "Art must have meaning, and meaning lies in the auspicious."

The materials presented in this three-part article on the archaeology of Purple-Sand clay are, of course, limited to these pages and to my own experience; there are many areas where it would be possible to go into much

greater detail. There are many other Purple-Sand clay pots of beauty and significance housed in museums and public and private collections in China and abroad that are also worthy of study; alas, it is not possible to list them all here. Nonetheless, I hope that the information I have been able to include will be of some benefit to readers interested in Zisha ware.

As we conclude this article, special thanks are due to the Taipei Chengyang Arts and Culture Foundation (臺北成陽藝術文化基金會), whose help contributed to the discovery and research of some of the archaeological finds mentioned in this article. The Chengyang Foundation's close collaboration with many museums and cultural history organizations in recent years has contributed significantly to expanding the depth and breadth of research in the field of Purple-Sand clay. In the future, there are plans for this type of collaboration to extend beyond China to the rest of the world; I'm sure that this will come as happy news to fellow enthusiasts of Purple-Sand clay art around the world.



龍四石



Left Page: Some of the maker's marks from pots found on the Desaru (photo provided by the Chengyang Foundation).

Above: Most of the pots found on the Tek Sing were zhuni red clay gongfu teapots (From the Chengyang Foundation Collection).

Left: A Zisha clay tea leaf jar brought up from the Desaru (From the Chengyang Foundation Collection).

SCOURING

AN YIXING TEAPOT

洗滌壺

MATERIALS YOU NEED

茶 A stainless steel cooking pot and lid, ideally not used to cook food and large enough to contain your teapot.

茶 Pure white ash, purchased or sifted from your brazier is ideal. Alternatives: In Taiwan, they sell a lemon-based powder for cleaning teaware, which is second best after charcoal ash, but maybe not available in the West. Sodium percarbonate, non-chlorine oxygen bleach in lieu of pure white ash is okay. In fact, we always use this for an especially dirty, old pot. It is water soluble, meaning it will be completely gone after a few boilings, which we'll get to in the procedure (just don't use regular bleach, containing sodium hypochlorite).

茶 A heat source (gas, electric or infrared stove).

茶 Spring water. (You can use tap water, but good spring water is much better!)

茶 Optional: "medicine stones (mai fan shi, 麥飯石)," bamboo or white charcoal and/or crystals. (All the things you use in your water urn that you use to store water for tea.)





There's not a lot of information on how to scour your Yixing teapots in English, and it is one of the most asked questions around here, so we thought this issue was the perfect opportunity to share our method. This method could be applied to teaware for bowl tea, but it's ideal for gongfu tea.

Whether you have a new or used Yixing teapot, or one of unknown origin, it's often a good idea to scour it before using it. If the pot is heavily used, you may have to repeat the following process several times. This will remove the oils of any tea prepared in the pot, which may not have been organic or fine tea, and will negatively influence your own sessions. Scouring is necessary, as we want to thoroughly clean out anything that would influence the tea steeped in the pot, like organic matter, mustiness, dust or tea oils from other steepings caught up in the pores of the teapot.

When a new pot is fired, all the organics in the clay become dust. Potters also use silica in the firing process to keep the lid from adhering to the body. All of this dust and sediment clogs the pores of the Yixing pot. The double-porous structure of an Yixing pot is what allows for capillary action: the pot breathes, in a way of speaking. This is one of the reasons that Yixingware preserves heat so well. Also, we want the pores open to absorb the oils of the tea we will prepare, seasoning the pot over time. It will then improve our tea and begin to glow with a brighter, more beautiful shine over time, much like the way our prayers polish our *malas*.

Scouring your pot is also a necessary treatment for a teapot that you plan to use for multiple types of tea. This will be the case for many of you, if you only have one or two teapots, which you use for different teas. In the beginning, if you only have one gongfu teapot, then use it for all your teas and simply scour it every six months to a year, depending on how much you use it. This is because your pot will accumulate oils from the various teas you brew in it, which will influence all of your tea sessions, noticeably as time passes. It's nice to enjoy tea in its purest form, not influenced by other teas. You can "reset" your pot, in a manner of speaking, by scouring it. However, it is always ideal to collect enough teapots to assign them to all the types of tea you enjoy.

We'd also love to hear about your successful scourings! Let us know your experience on the app.

歡迎回家者朋友

茶道是淨化

茶道



PROCEDURE

洗滌壺的程序

Make sure your cooking pot and lid are clean and washed completely of any soap. You never want to wash your teaware with soap. (We devote a pot just to scouring pots, so it never touches food, dish soap or any other contaminants. This is, of course, the ideal for the serious Chajin.)

1) Add some water to your cooking pot and carefully place your gongfu teapot inside. Remove the teapot lid and place it next to the body. Everything should be fully submerged in water. If spring water is hard to come by, it's okay to use tap water in this first stage, because you're going to use ash in the next step and it will all be boiled away in subsequent steps. Nevertheless, spring water throughout the process is ideal. This can be done with multiple teapots, depending on the size of your cooking pot. However, arrange them so they won't bump into each other too much. (You can add crystals, medicine stones and charcoal to the pot, making sure to place them properly so they won't rattle up against your pot.)



2) Bring the water to a boil over your heat source. We use a gas stove.

3) As the water comes to a boil, have your cleaning agent ready. You will only need a teaspoon of the ash or a half teaspoon of the bleach powder. Once the water has come to a full boil, carefully scatter the cleaning agent around the surface of the boiling water. At this point, immediately turn off the heat. This is particularly important if you use bleach, because it will bubble and overflow if you keep the heat on!



4) Put a lid on the cooking pot and let it sit overnight (around 8-12 hours). Make sure it's labeled and in a safe spot, so others don't move it or bump it accidentally!





5) The next morning, discard the water and thoroughly clean the cooking pot with warm water.

6) Clean your teapot and lid carefully under cool, running water. Here, you can use a very soft and natural cloth or a cleaning pad (make sure it has no chemicals in it, as many brands fill these with cleaning agents). We use a dried piece of loofah, which we have found to be ideal and all natural. Clean the entire surface of the teapot. You can also just use your thumb and fingers if you are scouring a new pot that doesn't require as deep or thorough of a scour. Whatever you do, do not use soap!



7) Once everything is clean, place the teapot and lid back in the cooking pot. Refill it with clean water and bring it to a boil again. Ideally, this should be better water than before, like the spring water you would use to make tea. Do not add any more cleaning agent (ash or oxygen bleach). Once it has come to a full boil again, turn off the heat, put the lid on the cooking pot and let it cool down for about four hours. Discard the water and repeat the cleaning process (clean the cooking pot with warm water, and the teapot using your thumbs, a cloth, scouring pad or loofah).

8) Repeat steps six and seven until your teapot is clean. It will probably take two to four cycles depending on how used the pot was. Just keep boiling it in spring water, rinsing/scouring under the faucet, boiling, scouring, boiling... The aim is to remove all the residue from the pores, as well as all the cleaning agent itself. There are a few things to look for to know when your teapot is clean:



茶 Look at the surface of the water in the cooking pot after the water has cooled down. If there is any residue on top, you need to keep cleaning.

茶 Smell the teapot after each cleaning. There should be no smell. Both bleach and ash have a signature smell.

茶 If you're using oxygen bleach, you can also use your hands because the bleach is slippery to the touch.

茶 As a final measure, maybe after a few boilings, you can add some clean water into your teapot, pour it out into a clean cup and taste a small amount. You'll know by tasting it if there is anything unwanted inside.

9) After that, your teapot is ready to brew tea!

茶 Make sure not to let your teapot sit in the water for too long at any stage. This process will take a couple of days, but if you neglect the recommended guidelines, you may need to start over entirely from the beginning!

茶 If you are going to use your teapot for more than one type of tea, always remove the spent tea leaves and liquor from your pot immediately after use! Clean it thoroughly under running water, and leave it out in a safe spot to air-dry with the lid removed. Once dry, store it away.

茶 If you are going to season your teapot with a specific type of tea, you can proceed with the following, tenth step. (This step is unnecessary if you are going to use your teapot for more than one type of tea.)



10) Place your teapot and lid back into the clean cooking pot and add water. Bring the water to a boil and add a few leaves (2–3 grams) of the tea you wish to brew in your teapot, turn off the heat and let it steep for a few hours. Discard the tea liquor, and rinse your teapot and lid under running water with your thumbs. (Remember, you only want to do this if you are sure about using only one kind of tea with this teapot.) Before using the teapot, you can rinse it two or three more times with water from the kettle at the tea table itself. You may also want to try it a couple of times before using it to serve tea to guests.

TeaWayfarer

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

In my household growing up, I remember tea being on the table many nights. Herbal tea, that is. It was something to soothe the throat when sick or to warm the body on a cold winter night. A space in the kitchen cupboard was dedicated to a variety of tea bags, my favorite of which was peppermint. But I don't consider that the beginning of my tea journey.

Neither was it the beginning when, in my late 20s, I began to drink green, oolong and *chai* teas purchased from a large tea store chain. Despite some exploration, at that point tea was simply another beverage—something I drank from a mug as I did other things. The door had begun to crack open, but I had not yet walked through.

Rather, the beginning was when a friend asked me to accompany her to a tea tasting with someone she had met at a regional tea festival. I hesitated at first, not really knowing what to expect, and at that point, not being particularly excited about an evening of tea. But as we sat that evening in a small studio apartment with three visitors from the other side of the country and one charismatic tea seller, sipping tea from tiny cups and chatting about tea and life, the door swung wide open.

When something sparks my interest, it tends to catch quickly and to burn hot. That night, I walked away with some Dong Ding oolong (which I finished quickly) and some shou puerh (which I have yet to drink, perhaps out of sentimentality), as well as with the start of something that would become integral to my life. In the coming weeks and months, a few friends and I began to explore tea more deeply—spending weekends frequenting tea shops in and around Seattle, ordering teas from various online sellers and having tea sessions late into the night. It continued like this for some time—and then I discovered Global Tea Hut.

I had been a meditation practitioner for a number of years, studying Buddhism and other contem-



茶人: Matthew Grohne

plative traditions and finding tangible benefits in putting the teachings to practice. So when I found Global Tea Hut, which integrated these two major parts of my life, it was a revelation. Tea became meditation, ceremony and a way of life. I still remember the excitement I felt upon receiving the February 2016 issue of the magazine (my second issue) and seeing that the topic was Zen and tea. As I sipped the Five Element Blend and read the articles therein, I had the distinct feeling that it felt “right.”

That feeling has only intensified in these past two years, especially after traveling to China in April on the annual trip. Meeting other members of the Global Tea Hut family has truly deepened my sense of connection to this community: articles in the magazine have become the words of friends. May you all find the connection and peace of mind that tea offers, through tea or otherwise. Look me up if you're ever around Olympia, WA. I would love to share tea with you. And if you will be at the Tea Sage Hut at the end of November, I'll see you soon!

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Zen & Tea Retreats

茶道

茶主题: Shou Puerh

茶主题: Chajin Stories/Biographies

茶主题: Sidehandle pots



We are looking to place some magazines in public spaces where more people will read them. If you know a library, tea house or tea shop, or any other location where these magazines may be read, let us know!



Keep the app active. Don't feel intimidated if you are a beginner. Post your tea sessions, share your ideas about the Tea of the Month or other teas you like, and feel free to ask questions.



The live broadcasts are so much fun that we are now doing two a month. There is the normal Q & A at the beginning of the month and another broadcast on the Tea of the Month at the end. Join us!



We are going to do a whole issue on recipes. Please submit your vegetarian recipes to our new 2017 Recipe Contest and you will get some bonus tea! (Winners will get some extra prizes along with a bonus tin.)



Our Light Meets Life fundraiser teas and teaware are arriving. Keep an eye out on the website, as some of the special teaware we are making this year will be very limited, and most likely, will sell very fast. The teas are also very exciting!



Did you love this issue? Well, we have some great news: this issue will be released as a hardbound book in 2018, including some extra articles to expand your Yixing knowledge and hundreds of photographs.



Wu De will be in Spain for our annual retreat this October. Then, there will be events in the United States afterwards. Check the website for more details: <http://www.globalteahut.org/wudeteachings>

Center News



Before you visit, check out the Center's website (www.teasagehut.org) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. Wu De will be traveling less in 2018. We will be posting next year's schedule in a couple of months so stay tuned.



Switching to a ten-day course schedule has proven to be Tea-inspired. The courses are deep and rich. We are getting some beautiful feedback and it feels like guests are going home with a deeper draught of darker tea liquor.



Samson Swanick was initiated into our tradition. We are proud to have him in this generation of the Hut. He is a beautiful soul. Be sure to look him up if you are in Bali. Also, he is next month's TeaWayfarer, so those of you who haven't yet met Samson will get the chance to hear his tea story.



If you could choose two topical courses to have in 2018, aside from the normal ten-day courses, what would they be? Let us know!

September Affirmation

I work with passion

Do I just go through the motions? Have I lost the drive to create and inspire others? Do I love what I do for a living? I am inspired and full of creativity. I live with passion and great devotion. I contribute value to my community.

龍運珠



www.globalteahut.org

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

GLOBAL TEA HUT
TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

