

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

**ART AS EVERYDAY PRACTICE: A STUDY OF
GONGFU TEA IN CHAOSHAN, CHINA**

A Dissertation submitted by
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the place of traditional Chinese tea culture in a society undergoing changes both culturally, with the rise of consumerism, and structurally, with the growth of a market economy and globalization. It does so by examining tea drinking in the Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong Province. Chaoshan is the home of a style of preparing and drinking tea known as ‘gongfu’ tea, involving preparation of strong tea in small pots, and drinking repeated brews in small cups. As well as being an important part of the regional food and drink culture, gongfu tea has been adopted outside Chaoshan as a refined form of tea culture, and even represented outside China as an authentic ‘Chinese tea ceremony’. It therefore provides an appropriate case study through which to examine both local practices and the processes through which local cultural objects are appropriated and transformed for use in other contexts.

The study pursues two lines of inquiry. The first examines the development of a contemporary discourse representing Chaoshan gongfu tea as a manifestation of a continuous tradition dating back more than 1,000 years to the Tang Dynasty. I argue that, while tea has long been consumed in Chaoshan, this representation is not supported by historical evidence, and is an example of an invented tradition.

The second line of inquiry is a study of contemporary gongfu tea-drinking practices, both among people born in Chaoshan, and among non-Chaoshan people who have taken it up as an acquired practice. Methodologically, the study uses sociological ethnography, in which the ‘field’ of research is not a specific locality but a field of inquiry defined by pursuing linkages relevant to the research questions. Findings are based on fieldwork involving semi-structured interviews with, and observations among, a snowball sample of 32 individuals plus one family that was treated, for analytical purposes, as a single unit. Fieldwork was conducted in four visits to the region between 2010 and 2017.

The study found that, among people born in Chaoshan, gongfu tea is experienced as an integral part of everyday life, rather than a form of tea *art*. As a practice, it entails close attention to detail in preparing, serving and drinking tea, on the one hand and, on the other, a high level of creativity, rather than slavish adherence to a prescriptive model. People who have taken up gongfu tea as an acquired practice exhibit similar skills, but for them, gongfu tea is unlikely to be woven into the fabric of everyday life. Some people choose to cultivate additional knowledge and skills in order to enhance their gongfu tea practice as tea art.

The study concludes by considering the relationship between Chaoshan *gongfu* tea as a cultural object created through discourse, and contemporary tea-drinking practices. I argue that the relationship is not as close as literary accounts imply. While each is informed by the other, neither is a mirror of the other, and each is a product of distinctive social processes: the discourse, by the activities of academics, entrepreneurs and others, each pursuing their own interests; tea-drinking practices, by the opportunities and constraints generated through economic and social processes emanating from the wider society.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, fieldwork, results, analyses, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original, has not been previously submitted for any other award, and does not contain any previously published material.



16 June 2017

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT



Signature of Supervisor/s

Date 19 / 6 / 2017

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
1.1 The evolution of Chinese tea culture.....	2
1.2 The changing context: globalization, individualism and consumerism in China today	10
1.3 Defining the scope of this study.....	17
1.4 Overview of the thesis	20
1.5 Ethics approval	23
1.6 Summary.....	23
1.7 A note on terminology and style.....	23
2. Methodology	25
2.1 Examining representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object ..	25
2.2 Studying Chaoshan gongfu tea as a practice: strategic issues.....	26
2.3 Fieldwork: sampling and data collection	27
2.4 Conceptual frameworks: from consumption ritual to everyday practice..	33
2.5 Data analysis: managing and interpreting data	35
2.6 Limitations	37
2.7 Summary.....	37
3. Chaoshan gongfu tea as a 'living fossil' (活化石): the creation of a literary discourse	39
3.1 Chaoshan gongfu tea on the internet	44
3.2 Critical perspectives: an invented tradition?	46
3.3 Discourse and the practice of Chaoshan gongfu tea	52
4. Chaoshan gongfu tea: inherited tradition and adopted practice.....	54
4.1 'Cong dongshi kaishi' (从懂事开始): Chaoshan gongfu tea as inherited....	54
4.1.1 Spatial integration	56
4.1.2 Temporal integration	58
4.1.3 Social integration.....	58

4.2	Gongfu tea as adopted practice.....	61
4.3	Conclusion	67
5.	Chaoshan gongfu tea as everyday practice	68
5.1	Preliminary steps.....	69
5.1.1	Selecting water	71
5.1.2	Heating the water	72
5.1.3	Selecting tea	72
5.1.4	Selecting utensils (chaju 茶具).....	74
5.1.5	Warming the pot, rinsing the cups.....	79
5.2	Making the tea - pengcha (烹茶).....	81
5.2.1	Putting tea-leaves in the pot or gaiwan (nacha 纳茶).....	81
5.2.2	Rinsing the tea-leaves	82
5.2.3	Brewing, pouring and serving the tea.....	83
5.3	Serving and drinking the tea.....	84
5.4	Gongfu tea and mental states.....	85
5.5	Conclusion	87
6.	Chaoshan gongfu tea as tea art.....	89
6.1	Conceptualising gongfu tea as tea art (chayi)	89
6.2	Creating a setting	90
6.3	Attentiveness to selecting and purchasing quality tea	93
6.3.1	Tea and trust.....	95
6.4	Setting time aside for gongfu tea	101
6.5	Attentiveness to utensils (chaju).....	102
6.6	Incorporating philosophical aspects into gongfu tea	103
6.7	The dimensions of refinement combined	105
6.8	Summary.....	107
7.	Conclusions	108
7.1	Chaoshan gongfu tea as discourse.....	108
7.2	The ethnographic field study: Chaoshan gongfu tea as everyday practice	110

7.3	Gongfu tea as art	113
7.4	Chaoshan gongfu tea as literary discourse and everyday practice: exploring the connections.....	114
8.	References.....	117
9.	Appendix A: information sheet and consent forms	123
10.	Appendix B: Interview guide for semi-structured interviews.....	130

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1: The study sample, and participants' connections with Chaoshan gongfu tea	32
Table 2-2: Summary of properties of drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea	34
Table 3-1: The steps in preparing traditional Chaoshan gongfu tea	42
Table 5-1: Preparatory steps in preparing gongfu tea	70
Table 6-1: Gongfu tea art as a multi-dimensional continuum	90
Table 6-2: Prevalence of attentiveness to the five dimensions of gongfu tea art ..	106

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Afternoon at Heming Tea-house, Chengdu, Sichuan Province.....	4
Figure 1-2: Provinces of China, showing location of Guangdong Province	18
Figure 1-3: Administrative divisions of Guangdong Province, showing location of Chaoshan region (i.e. Chaozhou + Shantou + Jieyang)	18
Figure 2-1: Structure of the initial 'snowball' sample (March 2010).....	29
Figure 2-2: Structure of 2nd snowball sample (March 2012)	31
Figure 4-1: Gongfu tea in the workplace: left, octopus ball vendor; centre, factory; right, Apple store.	57
Figure 4-2: Gongfu tea in a domestic setting.....	57
Figure 4-3: One of two spaces for drinking tea in Mr Lu's garden	66
Figure 5-1: Urn for storing water, with built-in filtration system.....	71
Figure 5-2: Stove, kettle and charcoal pellets traditionally used for heating water	72
Figure 5-3: Three kinds of tea plate or tea table.....	76
Figure 5-4: Drinking gongfu tea in shop in Chaozhou	76
Figure 5-5: Preparing Fenghuang Dancong tea in a gaiwan	77
Figure 5-6: Pouring tea from a gaiwan	79
Figure 5-7: Heating the pot, rinsing the cups: tradition and change.....	81
Figure 5-8: Putting tea-leaves into the pot (nacha).....	82
Figure 5-9: Using the lid to remove the bubbles (hu gai gua mo)	83
Figure 5-10: Tongs (jiazi) and fork (bei cha) for handling cups in a modern tea-house	84
Figure 6-1: Tea-room interior, Chaozhou.....	91
Figure 6-2: In a modern tea-house, Chaozhou	92
Figure 6-3: Supply pathways between farmer and consumer.....	96
Figure 6-4: Tea trees, Fenghuang Mountain	97
Figure 6-5: The process of lang qing - allowing the tea-leaves to oxidise	98
Figure 6-6: Steps in producing Fenghuang Dancong tea.....	99
Figure 6-7: 'Chan cha yi wei': sign in a temple in Chaozhou	103

1. INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, a young female arts graduate from Nanjing told me bluntly (in English): ‘Tea culture is dying. None of my friends drink tea. We know it’s good for you, but we don’t like the bitter taste’. Coincidentally, the same phrase turned up around the same time in another spontaneous assessment, this one from a thirty-something aged male CEO of an internet-based marketing company in Shanghai. On hearing that I was interested in Chinese tea culture, he remarked: ‘For people like me the tea culture is dying; when I think of tea culture I think of low energy, slowness; it doesn’t fit with the modern life in the way that cola does’.

Shortly after these encounters, I found myself at about 7 o’clock one autumn evening on a noisy, crowded street in Shanghai. Walking out onto the pavement from a subway exit, I came upon three men and two women, all - I subsequently learnt - in their 30s, sitting on the pavement on low stools, around a small wooden table on which they had placed a gongfu teaset. Gongfu tea is a relatively refined way of preparing and drinking tea using small teapots – around the size and shape of a persimmon, it is often said – in which a very strong brew is prepared, with the dry leaves sometimes filling one third of the pot, and served in small cups of around 30 ml capacity. Repeated brews are made from the same leaves, and a session of gongfu tea almost invariably involves the drinkers consuming many cups. The types of tea most commonly used to prepare gongfu tea are semi-fermented Oolong teas, but in principle any kind of tea can be used. In this instance the five friends were drinking what westerners call black tea but Chinese classify as red tea (*hong cha*).

While pedestrians hurried by, drivers blasted their horns and the deep thud of a nearby disco dance-floor pounded the night air, these five people sat sipping and chatting quietly, topping up the pot periodically with hot water from two large thermos flasks that stood beside the table. One of the women had also brought a box of chocolates to share. In response to my curiosity, they explained that they gathered here every Friday evening, in front of the shop owned by one of the group, to drink tea and chat. It was, they added, their way of enjoying their friendship.

What struck me at the time was how effectively, with these simple props, these five friends had created a little island of peace and quietness in a very noisy street. A Chinese friend to whom I later described the encounter immediately invoked a saying that captured the essence of what I had witnessed; this was, she said, an example of *nao zhong qu jing* (闹中取静): creating a place of peace amidst the noise.

Each of these episodes fed into the inquiry reported in this thesis, which concerns the place of Chinese tea culture in the contemporary world. Is it, as the two people quoted above implied, a cultural relic from a bygone, quieter era, or does it continue to be valued precisely because, in an ever noisier world, it helps us to preserve a time and place for quiet, nourishing pleasures? China is the home of the oldest tea-drinking culture (or, more accurately, cultures) in the world. The origins of tea-drinking have traditionally been ascribed to a mythical Divine Farmer named Shen Nong Shi (神农氏), who is said to have appeared during the third millennium BCE and, amongst other contributions, introduced the medicinal benefits of imbibing tea-leaves to his people (1). In a recent study, Benn dismisses the Shen Nong myth as having no historical basis and suggests that the earliest evidence for tea being drunk for medicine or pleasure dates from Sichuan some time before the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) (2). Whatever its origins, it is clear that by the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), tea was valued not only for its thirst-quenching and medicinal properties, but as the foundation of an established cultural tradition, aspects of which are described in the first extant treatise on tea in the world- Lu Yu's *Chajing*, or *Classic of Tea* (3), originally published in about 760 CE (4, p.271).

While several methods of preparing tea existed, the one most favoured – and described in the *Chajing* – was the *jian cha* method (*jian chafa* 煎茶法), which involved steaming freshly picked tea-leaves, grinding them, and compressing them into tea-cakes that were then strung together with reed or bamboo for drying. At the time of drinking, the tea-cake was roasted, then ground into a powder which was in turn poured into boiling water, to which salt had already been added. In Lu Yu's time it was also customary to add ginger, orange peel, jujube fruit or peppermint to the brewing tea, although Lu Yu made it clear that he strongly disapproved of this habit – the result, he asserted, was 'no more than the swill of gutters and ditches' (5, p.116).

1.1 The evolution of Chinese tea culture

Since that time, tea-drinking in China has undergone changes in all of its key dimensions: the technologies deployed to grow and produce tea and prepare it for drinking, the economic and political relationships governing its production, distribution and consumption, and the social meanings ascribed to preparing, serving and drinking tea in different settings (2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Running through all of these changes, however, two consistent cultural threads can be discerned: the first is the role of tea as an expression of sociability and the nurturing of social relationships; the second, a contemplative tradition in which tea is associated with simplicity, tranquillity and connection with nature. In the words of one modern writer, the discovery and cultivation of tea has created not

only a healthy beverage with rich flavours, but also – through the cultural traditions in which tea-drinking is embedded in China - a means for nourishing one’s inner nature and leading a moral life: ‘*Cha de faxian... wei renmen ganwu shengming, xiushen yangxing chuanguzao le yi zhong jue hao de fangshi.*’ (12, p. 50)¹.

Kramer refers to the two cultural traditions as ‘conviviality’ and ‘contemplation’ respectively (8). The convivial tradition is neatly captured by a popular saying: *yi cha hui you* (以茶会友) – literally, through tea make friends. The friendship associated with drinking tea is not just any kind of friendship, but rather friendship valued as an expression of the intrinsic qualities of the relationship, rather than for any utilitarian benefits it may bring to participants. The distinction is embodied in the very different notion of friendship in another saying: *jiu rou pengyou* (酒肉朋友), meaning ‘wine-and-meat friends’. These are friendships associated with the pursuit of self-interest, of value primarily for the opportunities they may generate. To share tea is to demonstrate a welcoming, respectful stance, and for that reason it has traditionally been used both in everyday life – for example, as a way of welcoming guests – and on more formal occasions, for example as a part of wedding ceremonies in many parts of China. The convivial tradition is also manifested in the many kinds of tea-houses that, from ancient times until the present, have served as settings for socialising in all of its many forms, both refined and profane. Gernet’s evocative description of Hangzhou tea-houses on the eve of the Mongol invasion in 1279, drawn from contemporary primary sources, offers a glimpse of both:

The town boasted a multitude of restaurants, hotels, taverns and tea-houses, and houses where there were singing-girls. The rich met at Hangzhou's celebrated tea-houses. Wealthy merchants and officials came there to learn to play various musical instruments. The décor was sumptuous, with displays of flowers, dwarf evergreens, and works by celebrated painters and calligraphers to tempt the passers-by. Teas of the highest quality or 'plum-flower' wine were served in cups of fine porcelain placed on lacquer trays, and in summer fritters, medicines against the heat, and beverages for contracting the gall-bladder were also served. Some tea-houses on the Imperial Way had singing-girls on the upper floor. But these were noisy places of ill-fame, and were avoided by the best people (13, p.49).

Today, tea-houses such as the Heming Tea-house in Chengdu (鹤鸣茶社) may not offer

¹ ‘茶的发现。。。为人们感悟生命，修身养性创造了一种绝好的方式’ .

‘singing-girls on the upper floor’. But, as Figure 1-1 shows, the groups of people young and old playing cards, chewing pumpkin seeds and chatting over a bowl of tea testify to tea’s continuing role as a vehicle for socialising.



Figure 1-1: Afternoon at Heming Tea-house, Chengdu, Sichuan Province

The contemplative tradition of tea-drinking draws on all of the three great spiritual-philosophical streams that have traditionally shaped Chinese culture – Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism (11) – but has historically been articulated most strongly through Buddhism. From the Tang Dynasty, tea was promoted by Buddhist monks as a preferable alternative to alcohol, both as a beverage in everyday socialising and as a drink especially compatible with the monastic virtues of personal restraint and self-awareness (2). Proponents of Chan Buddhism in particular – better known in the west by its Japanese name of Zen Buddhism – promoted tea-drinking as an aid to remaining alert during long periods of meditation. This, and the celebration of tea-drinking by Buddhist poets during the Tang Dynasty, resulted in tea as a cultural object and Chan Buddhism becoming, in Benn’s words, ‘almost synonymous’ (2, p. 43). ‘*Chi cha qu*’ (‘吃茶去’) – ‘Go and drink tea’ – the Tang Dynasty Buddhist monk Zhaozhou Congshen (赵州从谗) is famously supposed to have said on numerous occasions in response to questions about the meaning of reality or particular Buddhist teachings (14). Zhaozhou Congshen was one of the early masters of Chan Buddhism, according to which, the Land of Ultimate Bliss (*jile shijie* 极乐世界) is to be found not on a far distant ‘other shore’ but here in the present world, through mindful attentiveness to simple, everyday activities such as drinking tea (14).

In the course of the Song Dynasty (960 CE -1279 CE), tea came to be widely regarded as one of the basic necessities of everyday life - alongside, as one famous saying goes, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce and vinegar (8) – as well as an artefact of the otherworldly, spiritual

life (2). Technical advances in agriculture led to increased production of tea, while at the same time the centre of tea production shifted southwards into Fujian province, which became a major source of ‘tribute tea’, or *gongcha*, produced exclusively for the imperial court (7). Consumption of tea grew among both the court and intellectual circles as well as among ordinary people. The 12th century *Treatise on Tea* (*Daguan Cha Lun*, 大观茶论) written by the Song emperor Huizong (徽宗) provided not only detailed descriptions of how to grow, prepare and appreciate different kinds of tea, but also reflected on moral and philosophical aspects of tea culture (12). Referring to the prized *Bei Yuan* (北苑) imperial tribute tea grown in Fujian province, he wrote: ‘attain clarity, transmit harmony’ (*zhi qing dao he*, 致清导和) and ‘delight in what is high and attain tranquility’ (*yun gao zhi jing* 韵高致静) (12, p.121). In Buddhist monasteries, ritualistic tea-drinking practices became part of monastic life, while monasteries themselves became major centres of tea production (2).

During the Song period the method of preparing tea evolved from the *jian chafa* method associated with the Tang Dynasty. While loose leaf became more popular among ordinary people, among the court and literati a method known as *dian chafa* (点茶法), or ‘whisking tea’ became the norm. The term *diancha* – literally, ‘pointing tea’ – referred specifically to the practice of pouring a thin stream of hot water into the tea powder, but came to be used as a general description of the style of drinking tea during the Song period. This involved grinding the tea cakes into powder, passing the powder through a sieve, then placing the powder directly into the tea cups. Boiling water was then poured into the cups, while the brew was stirred with a tea whisk to produce a layer of froth on top of the tea (1, 7). In this form, tea-drinking contests – *dou cha* (斗茶) – became popular among the literati; participants would compete to whisk the tea in order to produce the most impressive froth in the bowl.

The overthrow of the Song Dynasty in 1279 by the Mongol founders of the Yuan Dynasty disrupted the established patterns of Chinese tea culture, at least temporarily. As Xu Xiaocun points out, while the new rulers, like other northern tribes, had an appetite for tea, they were not interested in the elegant refinements cultivated by Song elites (12, pp.93ff). Instead, the practices of the Song literati found new roots in a new setting – Japan. Although Chinese tea had made its way into Japan several centuries earlier during the Tang Dynasty, it was the *dian chafa* cultivated in the Song Dynasty that furnished the basis for what was eventually to become the Japanese tea ceremony (15). Wang Ling suggests that Japanese monks took Tang Dynasty tea art as well as the Song dynasty tea culture associated with Zen Buddhism, combined both with Japanese cultural perspectives to create a form of *chadao* (or Way of Tea) that was ultimately codified by

the 16th century Japanese scholar Sen Rikyū (in Chinese *Qian Lixiu* 千利休) as *chanoyu* (11).

While the historical events behind this episode of cultural diffusion are well understood, the implications are a matter of contention. Some Japanese writers have argued that ‘the art of tea’ disappeared in China following the Mongol invasion, and that it has survived only in Japan. The claim was made explicitly by Okakura in his widely reprinted essay on the Japanese tea ceremony (16). In this essay, written in English and originally published in 1906, Okakura argued that the beverage made by steeping tea-leaves in hot water – as practised from the Ming and Qing dynasties down to the present day, as well as in countless other regions of the world – yielded a ‘delicious beverage’, but none of the ‘romance’ of the Japanese tea ceremony (16, p.27-8). More recently, the Japanese tea scholar Sen Sōshitsu XV, the fifteenth Grand Master of the Urasenke *chanoyu* lineage, has asserted that although tea cultivation originated in China and tea is today drunk in many countries, ‘only the Japanese have created that cultural tradition that we call the Way of Tea’ (15, p.xxv).

Not surprisingly, this interpretation is not accepted by Chinese writers on tea culture. Wang Ling, for example, argues that the Japanese have drawn on only a small part of the ‘vast system’ (*pangda tixi* 庞大体系) of Chinese tea culture, that encompasses Confucian and Daoist in addition to Buddhist spiritual and philosophical traditions, as well as the huge variety of tea-related practices that have evolved among the many nationalities that constitute China today (11, pp.213 ff). If Chinese *chadao* is like a forest, she suggests, Japanese *chadao* is like a single pagoda or pond in the forest. Moreover, she argues, the emphasis in the Japanese tea ceremony on processes and utensils has resulted in it being characterized by many decorative components (‘*xiushi de chengfen*’ 修饰的成分) that isolate it from ordinary people’s lives. Chinese tea culture, by contrast, has a built-in flexibility that allows people to partake at different levels, according to their needs, preferences and local cultural traditions. Finally, Wang Ling points to what she sees as an important difference in the use of the term ‘*dao*’ (道) in China and Japan respectively. In the latter, *dao* can mean little more than technique or skill – as for example in the word for judo (柔道 *roudao*) – concepts for which Chinese uses not *dao* but *shu* (术) or *ji* (技). The word *dao* in Chinese, with its roots in Daoist tradition, refers to the ‘nature, origin and law of a thing’ (10, p.51) and connotes a unity of inner meaning and mental states with outer techniques or skills; it cannot be used simply for the latter.

The Ming Dynasty that supplanted the Yuan rulers in the mid-14th century and the Qing Dynasty that in turn rose to power in 1644 witnessed a revival of classical tea culture and

the emergence of modern styles of preparing and drinking tea. Early in the Ming Dynasty loose-leaf tea grew in popularity at the expense of the tea-cakes favoured during the Song Dynasty, leading to the emergence of the modern technique of pouring boiling water onto tea-leaves in a pot, then pouring the infusion into teacups, leaving the leaves in the pot, in contrast to methods used in the Tang and Song periods, when powdered tea-leaves was mixed in with the beverage and consumed, along with the liquid in which they were suspended (2). These changes, combined with improvements in productivity in cultivating tea, led to greater attention to the tea-leaves themselves – their shape, aroma, flavours – and to the cultivation of new tea-making processes, including scented, or flower teas (such as jasmine tea and ozmanthus tea) and green tea (7). The technique for making semi-fermented Oolong teas was discovered in Fujian province during the Ming dynasty, reputedly by tea-making monks in Wuyi mountain (17, p.113). Among the literati, tea-related themes featured in a range of literary and artistic genres, including paintings, songs, plays and lyric poetry, while the link with Buddhist contemplative values remained strong. As an example of the latter, Benn cites an English translation of Fan Yunlin’s (1558–1641) poem “Picking tea and staying overnight in a monk’s cell” (*Caicha jisu sengshe*):

In the drizzle I pause on the path through the pines,
Peaceful, the wind comes from afar.
I stay in the forest to obtain something rare,
Hearing speech, I know that I am wandering in his footsteps.
The wheat is flourishing like silver waves
Fragrant smoke of tea is slender and red;
Complete and deep, purifying conditions,
Holding this bowl, my mind is empty (cited in 2, p. 193)².

While the Ming literati emphasized the association between drinking tea and the cultivation of simplicity and natural surroundings, tea also became a staple part of ordinary people’s lives. Both of these trends continued throughout the Qing Dynasty. The Emperor Qianlong, who reigned from 1736-1796, was a particularly enthusiastic tea-

² The original text of the poem, entitled 《采茶寄宿僧舍》 is: 微雨逗松径，穆然来远风，投林得奇趣，闻语识游踪。麦秀银翻浪，茶香烟袅红，一泓涵净缘，持此鉴心空。（“*Cai cha jisu sengshe*”: *Weiyu dou song jing, mu ran lai yuan feng, tou lin de qiqu, wen yu shi youzong. Mai xiu yin fan lang, cha xiang yan niao hong, yi hong han jing yuan, chi ci jian xin kong.*）

drinker, who composed several tea poems and held an annual tea dinner at the beginning of each lunar new year for leading scholars (12, 17).

The social and political upheavals that engulfed China from the beginning of the 20th century had devastating effects on the tea industry as on other agricultural sectors. At the time of World War I, according to Etherington and Forster, China produced around 325 metric tons of tea on 355,000 hectares of land. By 1949, output had fallen to just 41,000 tons from 153,000 hectares (18). The government of the newly established People's Republic of China made concerted efforts to reclaim abandoned tea fields, and output initially increased rapidly, but the combination of climatic disasters and overplucking under the 'Great Leap Forward' in the late 1950s saw output decline once again. Production began to recover in the 1970s, although it was not until 1981 that output reached First World War levels. By this time, continuing state-run controls over production and marketing were generating concerns about the poor quality of tea produced, while state-run warehouses became overstocked with unsold tea. Market liberalisation from the mid-1980s led to improvements in quality and increases both in domestic consumption and export of tea (18).

The latter 20th century also saw the emergence of a renewed interest in Chinese 'tea art', in a movement that originated in Taiwan, from where it spread initially to Hong Kong and thence found its way back into the People's Republic of China (12, 19). In Taiwan, 'tea art houses' offered both a refuge from the stresses of modern urban life and a setting in which to express what was promoted as an authentically Chinese alternative to the lure of Western beverages such as Coke and Sprite (19). Today, throughout China, tea art houses can be found in which high quality (and expensive!) teas are served in settings designed to promote an ambience of deep tradition, tranquillity, and a refined appreciation of the elegant simplicity of tea-drinking. Xu Xiaocun identifies four main variants of contemporary tea art according to the preferred style of serving tea: (1) placing tea-leaves in a tall drinking glass and pouring hot water directly into the glass (*boli bei chong pao fa* 玻璃杯冲泡法), favoured for green teas such as *Longjing* tea; (2) preparing tea in a three-part teacup set known as a *gaiwan* (盖碗), consisting of a cup, saucer and lid, and drinking tea from the same cup, using the lid to filter the leaves from entering the mouth (*gaiwan chong pao fa*); (3) gongfu tea, in which a strong brew of tea is prepared in a small pot and served in small cups, with several serves normally being consumed from the same pot of leaves (*gongfu cha* 工夫茶), and (4) using similar utensils as in gongfu tea, with the addition of a small tumbler, into which the freshly brewed tea is first poured in order for the drinker to savour the aroma before the tea is in turn poured into the cup and consumed (*wen pin bei gongfu cha*). Both the third and fourth styles are normally used

with the semi-fermented Oolong teas popular in Taiwan, Fujian and Guangdong, and are rarely used with green tea (12). Xu states that, while much attention is sometimes given to refining the techniques and processes associated with each style, these are in fact merely the outer forms of tea art, and of less importance than the qualities that should underlie all of them, namely a peaceful state of mind and an understanding of how best to bring out the distinctive flavour and aroma of whatever tea is being prepared for drinking (12).

The ethos traditionally associated with tea-drinking, especially in its more refined forms, is conveyed in the concept of *chali* (茶礼), or tea etiquette or tea manners. One modern-day tea master and pioneer in applying scientifically-based improvements to the tea industry in Fujian Province – Zhang Tianfu – distinguishes *chali* from the related concepts of tea art or *chayi* (茶艺), which refers to the aesthetic aspects of preparing and drinking tea, and *chadao* (茶道) which, as we have already seen, conveys the intrinsic nature of a thing or process, and is usually rendered into English as ‘the way of tea’. Zhang argues that *chali* conveys the essence of modern tea culture in a way that is more more closely connected with ordinary people’s lives than *chadao*, and more relevant as a guide for living (20). *Chali* in his conceptualization has four dimensions or principles: *jian* (俭) frugality or simplicity; *qing* (清) clarity; *he* (和) or harmony, and *jing* (静), meaning calmness (21, p.83).

Zhang’s assertion that *chali* offers a viable framework for ordering one’s life in contemporary Chinese society has been elaborated by others. For example, Lin Jie contends that life in China today is out of balance; that while people enjoy the material benefits of technological advancement and improved living standards, their health and wellbeing are increasingly threatened by environmental pollution, while the pursuit of pleasure has fanned people’s desires. Social relationships have become cool and strained as a result of the pursuit of material wealth. The struggle for democratic and legal rights, according to Lin, only makes matters worse by fostering an extreme individualism and the neglect of training in morality and manners. Faced with the fallout of these trends, he continues, people are turning once again to a search for values such as love, harmony, trust, simplicity and tranquility. In this context, he argues, Chinese tea culture, and in particular the core values of *chali* as set out by Zhang, have heightened practical relevance (22).

As we have seen, not everyone agrees. Writing in the early 1990s, Kramer observed that a desire to be modern had led some young people to turn away from tea (8). China’s post-1978 engagement with the global economy, the ensuing emergence of what Yan has

described as a new individualism (23) and the growth of consumerism, especially from the 1990s onwards (24), have together radically reshaped the contexts in which tea as a cultural object and tea-drinking as a set of practices are constituted. Each of these processes, however – usually summarized by the terms ‘globalization’, ‘individualism’ and ‘consumerism’ – have taken distinctive forms in China, so much so that we need to be careful not to assume that the connotations they hold in Western societies apply also in China. In the following section, I consider how these processes define a context for the study of contemporary tea culture in China.

1.2 The changing context: globalization, individualism and consumerism in China today

Solinger defines modern globalization as ‘the intensified connection between national economies in the late twentieth century, along with an attendant neoliberal economic ideology that dictates deregulation and privatization’ (25, p.175). Emerging in the 1970s in response to the collapse of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate mechanism, which led to deregulation of financial markets, and the oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979, globalization has generated international movements of capital, labour and other factors of production, monetarist policies to manage inflation, increase exports and attract investment, and pressures on national governments to manage their economies in a way that ensures high credit ratings. However, according to Solinger, these events were not the driving factors behind what she calls China’s partial globalization. The decision under Deng Xiaoping in 1979 to restructure the economy by deregulating the labour market and adopting neoliberal principles was a political decision taken in order to lift China out of the stagnation and misery wrought by the Cultural Revolution, rather than a response to urgent international pressures. Insofar as the party-state continues to manage the nation’s exposure to international competition and to provide partial protection to the state sector, it represents a partial or virtual globalization.

Nonetheless, the policies adopted in China have led to a progressive deregulation of the labour market and a dismantling of the permanent, full-employment system for urban workers established under Mao. Bian (26) notes that under Mao a rigid status hierarchy allowed few opportunities for an individual to change her or his social position. The hierarchy was structured along four dimensions: firstly, a rural-urban divide institutionalized by the *hukou* system that restricted all Chinese to their place of birth for their lifetimes; secondly, a state-collective dualism, under which all peasants were assigned to the rural collective sector, while urban workers were assigned to either a state or collective sector position; thirdly, a cadre-worker dichotomy, under which cadres (*guojia ganbu*), dependent upon the party-state, occupied prestigious professional and

managerial jobs, while workers (*gongren*) rarely became cadres, and finally, designation into 'revolutionary' or anti-revolutionary classes primarily according to whether or not one's pre-land reform family of origin belonged to the property-owning classes.

The market reforms ushered in following 1978 and the associated rise of labour markets, according to Bian, eroded the institutional bases of this hierarchy and led to the emergence of an open, still evolving class system in which social mobility has become an almost universal experience. Migrant peasants have streamed into urban labour markets, while Mao's protected state-sector employees have become disempowered as a result of mass layoffs or transfers. Many cadres have benefited from the diversion of resources through 'informal privatization'. The status of intellectuals according to Bian remains ambiguous, while China's emerging middle classes have yet to develop the stable lifestyle or values common among their counterparts in advanced capitalist societies. New, as yet inadequately documented sources of inequality have also emerged.

Deregulation of the labour market and other reforms have also had implications for personal identity (*shenfen* 身份). A society in which personal identity was assigned by the state has given way to one in which individuals exercise agency in constructing their own identity (27). It is within this context that Yan posits 'the rise of the individual' as a central process in the post-Maoist transformation of Chinese society, a transformation marked in his account by a weakening of public controls over family life, greater personal control on the part of the individual over her or his life, increasing importance of companionate marriage and conjugal relationships, and growing emphasis on personal wellbeing (23). At the same time, Yan contends that the processes and ideals behind the emergence of the individual in contemporary China do not, at least up to now, amount to the 'institutionalized individualism' that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim theorise as characterising Western societies at the beginning of the 21st century (28).

According to the latter's 'theory of individualization', the fragmentation of social structures such as classes and families that has occurred in Western societies has created a society in which the basic institutions of society – civil, political, social – compel individuals to construct their own biographies by making choices that are adaptive to the contractual and regulatory requirements of labour markets, education systems, and the welfare and other systems (28, 29, 30). For both the Becks and Yan, similar processes are at work in China, although – as they also observe - in contrast to the western liberal democracies, these processes are taking place in the absence of either political democracy or a comprehensive welfare state. Yan's ethnographic study of life over several decades in the village of Xiajia, located in Heilongjiang province in northern China, led him to

postulate the emergence of ‘the uncivil individual’ (31). He argued that, following the collectivist period during which the socialist state exercised a comprehensive influence over everyday life, the state from the early 1980s gradually relinquished controls over people’s private lives, while concentrating its efforts on the core areas of the economy and political control. In doing so, however, it did not create a space for the emergence of a more autonomous civil society. Instead, it created a social vacuum of moral values and behavioral norms that was soon to be filled by sweeping consumerism and other values of the utilitarian individualism of late capitalist society. The ensuing decline of public life, the near-absence of community power, an increasingly predatory local government, and the accelerating pressure of competition in a market-oriented economy all contributed to the rapid spread of egotism and the rise of the uncivil individual – a person very concerned with individual rights and personal interests, but with little sense of obligations to the community or other people.

A number of more recent studies have suggested a need to qualify Yan’s bleak portrait, at least insofar as they report continuing acceptance of familial obligations, and Yan himself has more recently asserted that what he calls the ‘individualist individual’ characteristic of Western society has not emerged in China (23, 32, 33), in part because the concept of the individual has a distinctive history in China, one in which it has been coupled – in a way not to be found in the west - with a concern for national wellbeing and nation-building (23). Yan suggests – without developing the idea – that a more fruitful way of thinking about the individual in contemporary China than Beck’s ‘institutionalized individualism’ may be a ‘relational’ concept of the individual, derived from Mauss’s essay on the social history of the categories of ‘person’ and ‘self’ (34).

The other side of globalization, according to this thesis, is detraditionalization. The life of one's own is also a detraditionalized life. This does not mean that tradition no longer plays any role - often the opposite is the case. But traditions must be chosen and often invented, and have force only through the decisions and experience of individuals. The sources of collective and group identity and of meaning which are characteristic of industrial and pre-industrial societies have lost their mystique (28, loc. 785-8).

With the rise of individualism and a market economy has come modern consumerism. As the state came to be supplanted by the market as a distributor of consumer goods and services, and as per capita incomes rose, a commercialized leisure sector evolved in place of the orchestrated recreational activities hitherto provided by the workplace (*danwei* 单位), and mass consumption grew rapidly in China. The first western-style fast food restaurant opened in Beijing in 1984, followed three years later by the opening of the first

KFC restaurant in China (35). Within a few years an array of fast food outlets, both Chinese and foreign-owned, had appeared in numerous Chinese cities (36). Between 1978 and 1990 per capita income in China, adjusted for inflation, doubled, and grew by a further 50% between 1990 and 1994 (24).

The program of market-oriented economic reforms that was restarted by Deng Xiaoping in 1992, following the June 4 incident in Tiananmen Square in 1989, led to large numbers of people moving out of government and professional sectors into private sector entrepreneurial activities, and precipitated what Yan (37) has labelled a consumer revolution, in which consumerism eclipsed communist doctrine as the paramount cultural ideology of contemporary Chinese society. Consumption replaced political symbols in defining social position and status. Consumerism also, according to Yan, has implications for social space and individual freedom, as new forms of private gatherings in public commercialized venues have evolved, such as shopping malls, restaurants, bars and cafes. These venues, Yan contends, provide spaces for celebrating individuality and private desires. Consumerism has become, in the words of Karl Gerth, 'the new party line', as the national government seeks to promote domestic consumption as a means of reducing economic reliance on export markets in a context of global economic uncertainty (38).

Here again, however, as Gerth himself shows, Western connotations can be misleading. Like the concept of individualism, consumerism in China has a distinctive history, one that links it first and foremost according to Gerth, not with the private pursuit of material desires, but with nationalism, especially in the early 20th century, when organisations such as the National Products Movement sought to equate consumption of Chinese goods with patriotism in the face of the economic and cultural inroads being made by foreign imports. 'The consumption of commodities defined by the concept of nationality', Gerth argues, 'not only helped create the very idea of 'modern China' but also became a primary means by which people in China began to conceptualize themselves as citizens of a modern nation.' (39, p.3).

Today, according to Sigley, the revival of interest in Chinese tea culture has evolved into what he calls 'tea nationalism', in which tea culture is represented as an expression of a traditional and resurgent Chinese culture that is in the process of reclaiming its rightful place in the world (40). As Sigley points out, China's President Xi Jinping has on several occasions in international settings alluded to China's tea-drinking traditions as one of the features that distinguishes it from other nations and other cultural traditions.

Central to all of these processes - the opening up to a market economy, the growth of a

consumer society and the rise of new forms of individualism – is the process of what Appadurai calls the ‘commoditization’ of objects and activities (41). Appadurai proposes a cultural rather than an economic conceptualization of commodity; a commodity is ‘any thing intended for exchange’ (41, loc 287). As he points out, from this definition it follows that whether or not a thing is a commodity is determined not solely by the attributes of the thing itself but also by the context in which it is situated, which may change several times during the life of the thing. For example, a family heirloom that would never, under normal circumstances, be traded as a commodity, may be put up for sale as a result of the family experiencing economic hardship. A thing becomes a commodity to the extent that an exchange value is ascribed to it and it is drawn into processes of commodity exchange. These in turn can be distinguished from other forms of exchange, notably barter, or the direct exchange of things, and gift exchanges.

From this perspective, commoditization is what Kopytoff calls ‘a process of becoming rather than . . . an all-or-nothing state of being’ (42, loc 1600). The production of commodities is a process of cultural definition as well as material production, in which some but not all of the things existing in a society are considered as appropriate for being treated as commodities. Further, as Kopytoff argues, not only can the commodity status of a thing change over time, but at one time a thing may be regarded as a commodity by some people, but not by others. For example, a wooden statue created as a means for honouring a family’s ancestors may be seen by tourists or art dealers – or perhaps by some family members - as a saleable commodity.

Kopytoff outlines three key sets of processes as being relevant to the understanding of commoditization. The first is made up of the cultural elements that serve to resist commoditization in any society, in some cases by placing a thing in the realm of the sacred, in others by defining appropriate and therefore inappropriate uses and settings. The second process is the relentless expansion of commoditization generated by the development of large-scale market economies. As he puts it: ‘In all contemporary industrial societies, whatever their ideologies, commoditization and monetization tend to invade almost every aspect of existence, be it openly or by way of a black market’ (42, loc 1896).

A third set of processes, that he touches on only briefly, is the disruption of cultural meanings of things entailed in the increasing intrusion of large-scale market economies into small scale societies. In the latter, the meaning attached to objects is ordered by more or less stable, shared systems of classification. The process of commoditization associated with complex, commercial societies reaches into and disrupts this order, giving rise to

multiple meanings and classificatory orders. Alongside an exchange value reflecting an object's status as a commodity, older meanings and classificatory orders may continue to exist, while new, more private and inherently unstable meanings may also arise, in part as a product of a continuing pre-occupation with personal identity that Kopytoff sees as characteristic of complex, market-driven societies.

Within this context, activities such as preparing and sharing a cup of tea are instances of what Douglas and Isherwood call 'consumption rituals' – that is, culturally inscribed activities through which participants not only attempt to satisfy utilitarian needs but also mark particular occasions and/or give meaning to social relationships (43). In her study of religion and ritual published initially in 1970, the anthropologist Mary Douglas argued that ritual has the capacity to perform three important functions in social life: firstly, that of ascribing meaning and coherence to the experience of living; secondly, that of affirming the location of participants in a system of social relations, and thirdly, by mediating the relationship between the individual and society, that of helping to shape the participant's sense of his or her identity (44). Douglas argued that the efficacy of ritual in performing these functions depended not only upon the rituals themselves but also on the structure of social relations in the society in which they were embedded. These she conceptualised in terms of her well known, two-dimensional 'grid/group' framework, where 'group' represents the degree to which members of a given society or community are constrained in their actions by membership of particular groups, and 'grid' represents the strength and nature of the rules and classification systems governing social relationships and cultural phenomena in a given context.

Douglas argued that as roles and positions in a given social context become less structured – for example, as a result of market-driven economic growth - and social relations become more amenable to choice and change, ritual as the affirmation of a person's inclusion and identity in a stable system of relationships loses its perceived efficacy. This in turn may lead to its abandonment or rejection as empty and irrelevant. Since the need for meaning and coherence in people's lives does not simply disappear, however, it may also lead to a private search for meaning and identity.

Tea culture, from this perspective, is not so much a cluster of traditional practices that one can observe 'out there' but rather an ensemble of socially constructed objects, ideas and practices that are continually being crafted and modified through numerous discourses and activities, as an array of social agents, each with their distinctive interests and resources, seek to define a place and meaning for tea-drinking in a modern, consumer-oriented society - one in which tea is just one of an increasing number of beverages

available, and in which cultures of food and beverage consumption are themselves evolving (36, 45). Tan and Ding describe many of these processes in their study of the development of a modern culture of tea consumption in Fujian Province, China (46). Prior to the economic reforms of the late 1970s, as we have seen, the sale and marketing of tea was controlled by the state. High quality tea grown in the Anxi region of Fujian was almost all exported, while the tea available for domestic consumption was of poor quality, and consumption levels were low. The transfer of responsibility for marketing tea to private interests created both new marketing opportunities and a need for more modern approaches to production and consumption. In accomplishing this, Anxi tea farmers received guidance from counterparts in Taiwan, who themselves had recently introduced new processing technologies. Tan and Ding show how, from the 1980s onwards, tea merchants, tea farmers and government officials combined to promote a lightly fermented style of Oolong tea, known as Tie Guanyin and incorporating Taiwanese influences, as a major local industry. In conjunction with these developments, a new style of preparing and drinking tea became popular. Prior to the economic reforms, tea was brewed in porcelain teapots and served in teacups of varying sizes. In the new style, modelled on the gongfu tea procedures used in the neighbouring Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong Province, tea was brewed in lidded teacups known as *gaiwan* and served in very small cups of around 30 ml capacity. Although, according to Tan and Ding, the new style was not popular in Quanzhou before 2000, by the time of their fieldwork in 2006 it was considered to be the traditional way of drinking tea in the area, and was being promoted by local *wenhuaren* (cultural intelligentsia) and others as an elegant, refined way of enjoying tea. The authors argue that the creation of a modern culture of tea consumption in Quanzhou is an instance of an invented tradition - that is, a set of practices being interpreted as the contemporary expression of a long-standing, continuous tradition, the origins of which are held to lie in a past more distant than can be supported by available historical evidence (47). These processes, moreover, are not confined by national borders. In a globalized world, not only do external forces intrude into and reshape local values and preferences associated with tea drinking and tea culture, but Chinese tea culture itself is open to becoming another cultural commodity, drawn into what Palumbo-Liu has described as transnational flows of cultural capital, in which cultural objects are appropriated, transformed and reproduced in new settings (48).

The analytical challenge entailed in understanding the cultural place of tea and tea-drinking in China today is to describe these discourses and practices, and to attempt to explain the social processes through which they are created and transformed. To do so is to attempt to fill a gap in our understanding of contemporary Chinese tea culture. As Kramer (8) and Tan and Ding (46) observe, despite the long and rich history of tea in

China, there has been little ethnographic research on the place of tea in popular culture today. The challenge, however, imposes a prior requirement: defining the scope of an inquiry in such a way that it is feasible to accomplish with whatever resources are to hand, while at the same time yielding insights that are relevant beyond the particular instances examined.

1.3 Defining the scope of this study

China's tea culture, to invoke Wang's metaphor, can indeed be seen as a forest containing many varieties of plants. The five people sipping gongfu tea on the busy Shanghai pavement; the ambience of refined politeness with which tea is served, often by demure young women, in tea art houses, and the crowds of young people congregating at bars to buy sweet, syrupy confections known as 'bubble tea' (*paomo hong cha* 泡沫红茶) or 'pearl milk tea' (*zhenzhu naicha* 珍珠奶茶), both developed in Taiwan but now sold in other parts of Asia, Europe, the US, Australasia and no doubt elsewhere, are all expressions and contemporary adaptations of a rich, ancient cultural tradition. So too is the continuing status of tea in China – often elaborately packaged – as a medium for gift-giving within both friendship and commercial networks.

The focus of this study is the home of gongfu tea: a culturally and linguistically distinct region in eastern Guangdong Province in south-eastern China known as Chaoshan (49). Geographically, the region is made up of three contiguous prefectural cities – that is, urban centres together with their surrounding towns and rural areas. The three cities are Chaozhou (2010 Census population 2,669,844), Shantou (2010 population 5,391,028) and Jieyang (2010 population 5,877,025) – making a total regional population of just under 14 million (50). The name 'Chaoshan' does not refer to an official or administrative region, but is an amalgam of the names of Chaozhou and Shantou.

The region's location is shown in the two maps below. Figure 1-2 shows the position of Guangdong Province in China, and Figure 1-3 locates the three prefectural cities that constitute Chaoshan within Guangdong Province. Chaoshan is densely populated, even by Chinese standards. With a combined area of 10,362 square kilometres, the region makes up just 5.8 per cent of the total area of the province (51), but in 2010 it contained 13.4% of the total provincial population of 104,303,132 people (50).



Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University

Figure 1-2: Provinces of China, showing location of Guangdong Province³



Source: www.editablemaps.com

Figure 1-3: Administrative divisions of Guangdong Province, showing location of Chaoshan region (i.e. Chaozhou + Shantou + Jieyang)

As Figure 1-3 shows, the Chaoshan region adjoins southern Fujian Province, with which

³ <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/maponline/base-maps/china-provinces-0> (retrieved 19 June 2017)

it shares historical and cultural affinities. The local language, known as Chaoshan dialect, is not Cantonese but a variant of Minnan (闽南 Southern Min), which in turn is a subgroup of the Min language group that is spoken through southern Fujian Province, southern Zhejiang Province and in Taiwan, as well as many parts of Southeast Asia where it has been taken by emigrants and traders (49, 52) .

The original inhabitants of Chaoshan are thought to have been Min-Yue people, but over the centuries successive waves of migration took place from the Central Plains region to the north, resulting in a regional culture that has absorbed elements of both the indigenous inhabitants and the immigrants. The region is made up a coastal plain threaded by rivers and deltas, surrounded to the north, east and west by mountains, while to the south lies the South China Sea. The surrounding mountains have served as a natural barrier, containing tropical, sub-tropical and temperate areas, favourable to the cultivation of an extensive range of crops (51). These conditions, together with the relative isolation have also fostered a distinct regional food and drink culture. Chen Yunpiao summarizes what he calls the ‘unique characteristics’ of this in the following description:

The dietary culture of the Chaozhou and Shantou (Swatow) inhabitants is a combined product of traditional foodways of Northern and Southern China, which embodies many of the practices of ancient Central China, such as using the six farm animals in cooking, eating the "soup of the seven," crispy pancakes and the many kinds of rice buns during festivals. At the same time, the eating habits characteristic of many places in Southern China such as eating wild game, seafood and other unusual dishes have also found their way into the diet of the local inhabitants. The dietary culture of the present- day Chaoshan inhabitants is still in a state of constant change, incorporating elements of other food cultures (53 loc. 467).

At the heart of this culture, according Chen and others (51, 53, 54), is Chaoshan gongfu tea. According to Chen, it is seen by the people of Chaoshan as symbolising their food culture as a whole. The most widely consumed type of tea, as I show in this study, is produced in the Fenghuang Mountains north of Chaozhou – one of the range of mountains that help to define Chaoshan as a distinct cultural region.

Ironically, while the Chaoshan region has long been a relatively isolated, peripheral part of China, its high population density, limited land availability and proximity to the sea have generated a tradition of overseas migration, to many parts of Southeast Asia and

further afield. Zhao Songqiao, writing in the mid-1990s, described Chaoshan and the neighbouring coastal region of Fujian Province as the homeland for more than 30 million overseas Chinese (55, p. 239).

The selection of any entry point into such a large cultural forest has an element of arbitrariness, but there are several reasons why Chaoshan gongfu tea is well suited to this inquiry. Firstly, the tradition of tea-drinking in Chaoshan is known to be particularly strong and locally distinctive. Wang singles out Chaoshan as one of two places in China where ancient tea drinking traditions remain especially strong (11). Secondly, as noted above, gongfu tea is one of the styles of preparing and drinking tea adopted in the modern ‘tea art’ revival, and has as a result been taken up by tea drinkers who were not born or raised in the Chaoshan region. Thirdly – as I demonstrate in this inquiry – variants of gongfu tea are today represented, mainly outside China, as an authentic ‘Chinese tea ceremony’. For these reasons, an examination of representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea in discourses, and of the tea-drinking practices of gongfu tea drinkers – including those born within and outside Chaoshan itself – promises to yield at least some tentative insights into the processes and practices shaping gongfu tea as a cultural object, the place of gongfu tea in people’s lives, and the ways in which changes in the changing social and cultural contexts of everyday life are impacting on the place of gongfu tea.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

Chapter Two contains an outline of methodological aspects of the thesis: it includes a description of the research design and the sampling strategy adopted for fieldwork. As a qualitative, ethnographic study of gongfu tea in Chaoshan, the study does not test any *a priori* hypotheses, but rather begins with a framework of sensitizing concepts (56) and develops both descriptions and explanations through data analysis involving the use of *emergent* concepts. These are recounted in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three examines the modern literary discourse about Chaoshan gongfu tea, according to which it is represented as ‘a living fossil’ (*huohuashi* 活化石) – that is, a contemporary manifestation of a tea-drinking tradition that dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). This claim is then examined critically in light of modern scholarship, and found to be an ‘invented tradition’. The chapter concludes by tracing the origins of the contemporary literary Chaoshan gongfu tea discourse.

The next three chapters – Chapters Four to Six – present the findings of fieldwork, in which I attempt to describe and analyse the practices of gongfu tea drinkers, and the meanings of those practices for the drinkers. In Chapter Four, drinkers are categorized

according to whether they were born in Chaoshan and grew up inheriting gongfu tea-drinking as part of their world (22 study participants), or whether they came from outside the area and had adopted gongfu tea as an act of personal choice (4 individual study participants and one family). I argue that these two pathways, labelled ‘inherited tradition’ and ‘acquired practice’ respectively, shape the meaning and experience of gongfu tea in distinctive ways. Drawing on interviews with study participants, I describe and compare each of these pathways to gongfu tea-drinking. Among most people for whom gongfu tea is an inherited rather than an acquired practice, drinking gongfu tea is not regarded as ‘tea art’ – that is, as an adornment to daily life – but rather as an integral part of it; it is habitual – *xiguan* (习惯) – and integrated into the spatial, temporal and social dimensions of everyday life. Those who come to gongfu tea as an acquired practice may adopt many of the same practices as those for whom it is an inherited tradition, and may value drinking gongfu tea highly, but it remains something added onto their lives rather than something woven into the fabric of their social worlds.

In Chapter Five, drawing both on interviews and observations, I describe the practices through which gongfu tea-drinking is accomplished in everyday life today. The fieldwork revealed evidence of both change and continuity with past practices, at least as these have been documented. It also shows that, while gongfu tea drinkers pay close attention to the fine details entailed in properly preparing, brewing, serving and drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea – an attention to detail for which gongfu tea is renown, and which is succinctly conveyed in the Chinese term *jiangjiu* (讲究) – and although they observe conventions associated with preparing and drinking gongfu tea, they do not slavishly follow prescriptions. At almost every step along the way, the host who prepares the tea makes choices – in selecting the tea, the kind of vessel in which it will be brewed, the ways in which teacups will be rinsed, and the way the tea is served. Drinking gongfu tea, I argue, is a creative, as well as a ritualistic activity. The choices made can be seen not only as cultural preferences, but also as adaptations to both the opportunities and constraints available to participants in particular tea-drinking settings. It is through these opportunities and constraints that tea-drinking as a micro-social activity is shaped by forces at work in the wider society, for example by structuring the times or places available for drinking tea, or the opportunities available for spending time with friends.

For some, the creative component in gongfu tea takes on particular significance. In Chapter Six I explore the ways in which some gongfu tea-drinkers have chosen to cultivate an approach that makes gongfu tea, for them, a form of tea art. Again, however, my fieldwork showed clearly that this is accomplished, not by adhering to some sort of template of gongfu tea art, but rather by being particularly attentive to, and developing

expertise in, one or more of five key dimensions of gongfu tea as a practice, namely creating special settings or spaces for drinking gongfu tea; by developing and using expertise in selecting and purchasing high quality teas; by setting time aside for enhanced enjoyment of gongfu tea; by cultivating expertise in and using fine quality tea utensils, and/or by incorporating spiritual and philosophical traditions of Chinese tea culture into one's tea-drinking practices. In this light, gongfu tea as a form of tea art is a relative, multidimensional concept; a drinker's practice may be highly 'artistic' along one dimension, less so along others.

Chapter Seven brings together the findings of the study. The results of the examination of the literary discourse, and of the ethnographic exploration of gongfu tea-drinking practices, are summarised. I then consider the relationship between the representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea-drinking as a cultural object in contemporary discourse, and as a set of practices in everyday life, and conclude that the relationship is, at best, tenuous. While discourse and everyday practice are informed by each other, they do not mirror each other. Each, rather, is a product of distinctive social processes. The discursive creation of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object takes as its foundation, not the observed practices of tea-drinkers today, but a literary description of gongfu tea by Weng Huidong (翁辉东), dating from 1957 (57), that first described in detail gongfu tea as a traditional, refined form of tea art. Since then it has been promulgated through a range of activities undertaken by academics, entrepreneurs, bloggers and others, all of them pursuing their own objectives, and drawing upon a variety of resources, tangible and intangible. These processes have little to do with the social and cultural factors shaping everyday practices among today's drinkers of Chaoshan gongfu tea, both within and outside Chaoshan itself. While decisions about how, when and where to drink gongfu tea are shaped in part by culturally transmitted understandings and meanings, they are also adaptive responses to the opportunities and constraints generated by processes in the wider society that determine, for example, the times and places available to would-be gongfu tea-drinkers.

Finally, the study looks to the future. As economic and social changes in the wider society continue to affect the constraints and opportunities shaping people's everyday lives, it is possible to foresee five possibilities, not all of them mutually exclusive. Firstly, Chaoshan gongfu tea may remain unchanged. This is unlikely, given that – as this study shows – it has already changed over recent decades. Secondly, it may become marginalized as a cultural relic. The evidence from this study, showing how deeply gongfu tea is integrated into everyday life in Chaoshan, suggests that this is also unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future. Thirdly, it may be drawn further into the market-driven world of commodity exchanges, as another beverage on an ever-evolving menu of beverages.

There are signs of this occurring, some of which I describe in this study. Fourthly, it may be taken up more strongly than at present as a non-local form of cultural consumption, for example, as a way for businesspeople to entertain clients and associates, or as a ‘Chinese tea ceremony’. Again, these processes are already present. Finally, it may continue to adapt to the opportunities and constraints imposed by the wider society in a way that continues to enrich the everyday lives of people in Chaoshan. This study suggests that this remains a strong possibility.

1.5 Ethics approval

The project received approval by the University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee in March 2010 (approval HE10/045). Copies of the Information Sheet and Consent Forms used for the study are included below as Appendix A.

1.6 Summary

This dissertation examines the impact of recent and continuing changes in Chinese society – in particular the shift from a command economy to a market-driven economy, and the associated rise of consumerism – on traditional Chinese tea culture. It does so by means of a qualitative, ethnographic study of tea-drinking in the Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong Province. Chaoshan is the home of a particularly refined style of preparing and drinking tea, involving the use of small teapots and cups, which are used to consume repeated brews of strong tea. Gongfu tea is not only widely practised in Chaoshan, but has also been adopted outside the region as a distinctive form of contemporary tea art, and has even made its way into international settings as an authentic ‘Chinese tea ceremony’. It can be studied, therefore, as an example of both the place of a traditional tea culture in a traditional setting, and of contemporary processes that redefine that culture in new settings.

1.7 A note on terminology and style

Chaoshan gongfu tea is sometimes referred to as *Chaozhou* gongfu tea, after one of the cities that form part of the region. The terms are interchangeable. I have generally used ‘Chaoshan’ in this thesis. The term ‘gongfu tea’ in Chinese – gongfu *cha* – is sometimes written as 功夫茶, but more often as 工夫茶 (eg (54, 58, 59, 60, 61). A case can be made for both usages: ‘gongfu’ when written as 功夫 connotes skills and attainments; when written as 工夫, it also connotes skills, but also the presence of available time. Chaoshan gongfu tea is associated with both of these connotations. When citing books and other sources, I follow the relevant author’s usage. In quoting the words of research participants, I use 工夫茶.

Finally, although strictly speaking gongfu, as a non-English word, should arguably be italicised throughout this dissertation, I have chosen not to italicise it, mainly because my use of the term is so frequent that the repeated use of italics in the text for the same term is likely to be mildly irritating, at least to some readers, while adding nothing to what is being said.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research reported here is a qualitative study of gongfu tea in Chaoshan, China, both as it is represented as a cultural object, and as everyday practice. The purposes of the study are threefold: firstly, to describe – and, as far as possible, explain – the place of gongfu tea today in the lives of those who drink it, both in and beyond Chaoshan; secondly, to examine the relationship between gongfu tea as a cultural object, and as experienced in the everyday lives of gongfu tea drinkers, and thirdly, to examine the impact of ongoing changes in the wider society on gongfu tea-drinking practices. In this chapter, I describe the methodological approach taken in the study, outlining in turn the approach taken to analyzing representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object; the sampling strategy underpinning fieldwork; the way in which fieldwork was conducted; and the analytical procedures used to interpret observations and draw conclusions.

2.1 Examining representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object

The key analytical concept used to look at the representation of gongfu tea as a cultural object is that of *discourse* – defined as ‘a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)’ (62, p. 1). Discourses are created through language – spoken and written – but also through non-linguistic systems of communication. For example, the décor and furnishings of a tea-house can be read as ways of representing ‘tea culture’ – whether through the spare elegance of a Taiwanese ‘tea art’ house, or the heavy lattice paneling and displays of calligraphy used to evoke an ambience of tea-drinking as a hallowed tradition, or even the brightly lit shops in modern shopping centres in China, such as the *Mitea* (弥茶) chain, where you can queue up for a takeaway mug of cheap Oolong tea mixed with fruit syrup and topped with cream, to sip through a straw.

Properly speaking, discourse analysis involves examining not only the representations themselves, but the institutional structures through which they are created, disseminated and modified, and the social practices through which these outcomes are achieved (63). Implicit in such a sociological analysis is the importance of attending to ways in which particular ways of representing the subject of the discourse are privileged – or just taken-for-granted – and others silenced. My purpose in this study is more limited. I attempt to *describe* ways in which Chaoshan gongfu tea is represented today, focusing mainly on literary and internet-based representations. In particular, I explore the representation of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a ‘living fossil’ or *huohuashi* (活化石), embodying the essence of a tradition of Chinese tea culture that dates back more than 1,000 years to the Tang

Dynasty, and its representation outside China as an authentic Chinese ‘tea ceremony’. I do not, however, attempt to uncover the institutional foundations of these discourses. To do so would have entailed a major study in its own right and led in directions quite different to those guiding this study.

Instead, in Chapter Three I describe these discursive representations by examining a number of examples. I trace the origins and evolution of contemporary representations, and subject the arguments and claims informing them to critical assessment in the light of historical scholarship. The resulting description of contemporary representations then provides a point of reference and comparison for the study of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a contemporary social *practice*.

2.2 Studying Chaoshan gongfu tea as a practice: strategic issues

Just as the communication networks through which representations of gongfu tea flow do not lend themselves to a study bounded by a single locality, so too the study of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a social practice, though highly localized in one aspect, requires looking beyond the geographical region known as Chaoshan. As Li points out, in today’s highly interconnected world, we cannot hope to understand food consumption or preferences by restricting our observations to a single community. The ways in which people eat and drink, and what they eat and drink, are shaped by factors outside local cultural values, including economic and political forces, international trading patterns and the attempts by commercial and other agencies to create new markets or boost their share of existing markets (64). As Gupta and Ferguson point out, it is questionable to what extent the model of the world as a collection of spatially-defined localities with local cultures ever accorded to the reality of many people’s lived experience in a world wracked by migration, refugee flows and the transpositions of ‘homeland’ cultures into new settings, but its shortcomings are even more critical in a contemporary globalized world in which complex and inter-related flows of people, capital, goods and communications have blurred if not obliterated spaces, boundaries and communities (65, 66).

For the present study, what this means is that the connections between Chaoshan gongfu tea as a set of practices, Chaoshan as a geographical region, and Chaoshan cuisine as a distinct cultural phenomenon cannot be taken for granted, but need to be explored as part of the inquiry. This in turn required a research design and methods that would allow me to explore several domains in a single study: one was the domain in which Chaoshan gongfu tea is represented as a cultural object – in books and other literary media, on the internet, and other contexts that the research might uncover. Another consisted of the

micro-social settings in which gongfu tea is prepared and drunk, and the not so ‘micro’ settings and connections through which the tea used in Chaoshan gongfu tea finds its way from the farmer who grows the tea to the drinker’s table.

To meet these requirements, I adopted a strategy designated by Nadai and Maeder as ‘theory-driven sociological ethnography’ (67). Sociological ethnography, according to Nadai and Maeder, employs similar methods of gathering data to classical anthropological ethnography – observation, interviewing - but differs from the latter in that the ‘field’ of inquiry is not a single, spatially-bounded group or community but rather a set of activities, interactions and contexts generated by their relevance to a particular research question. The ‘field’ is constructed by the researcher from engagement with one or more social worlds. Typically, in today’s world, it will encompass more than one observational site, with some of these becoming relevant only as the researcher traces linkages, relationships or points for comparison generated by emerging answers to the research questions. Hence the approach is also sometimes called ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (67, 68)⁴.

2.3 Fieldwork: sampling and data collection

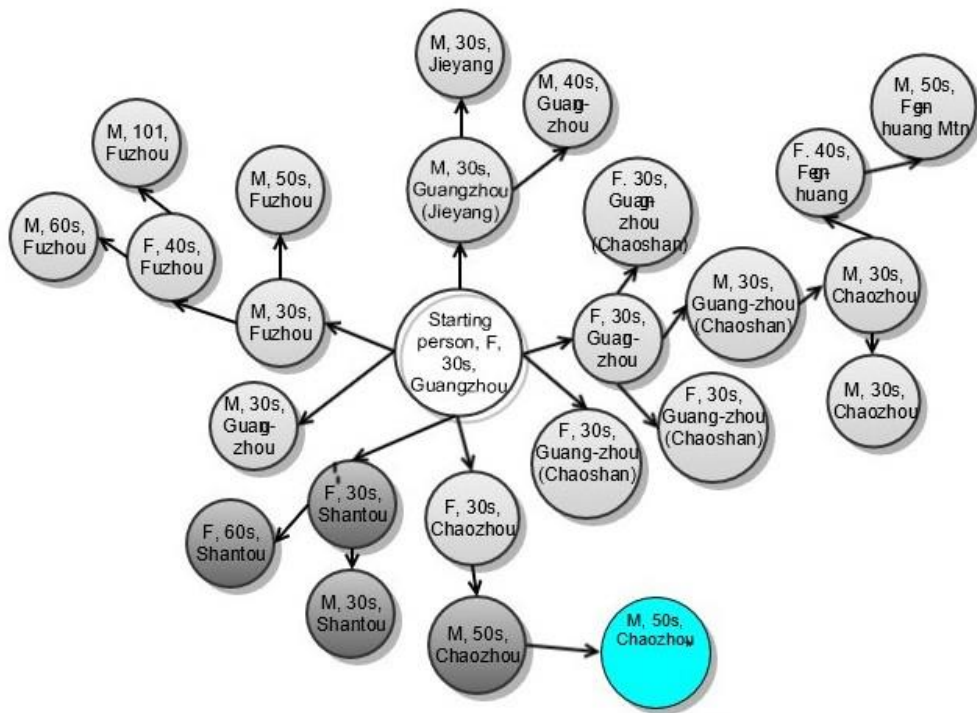
In order to study Chaoshan gongfu tea as contemporary practice, I generated a snowball sample – that is, a sample created through referrals by people, all of whom drank gongfu tea, to other people known to them who also shared this characteristic (70). As a sampling technique, snowball sampling utilizes personal networks. It is a qualitative research technique that does not aim for statistical representativeness of a population, but rather engages in purposeful sampling in order to gain access to people (or events, or institutions, depending on the research topic) through whom one can expect to gain deeper understanding of the research topic (71, 72). Because it draws on personal social networks, snowball sampling offers access to relationships in which mutual trust and understanding are already present or easily created, thereby facilitating the research inquiry. It may also, however, exclude those who, because of age, ethnicity, social class or other factors are unlikely to form part of a given person’s social network (73) – an issue to which I return below.

My fieldwork began in March 2010 in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province. The

⁴ Critiques of anthropological orthodoxies stimulated by doubts about their adequacy or appropriateness for understanding the contemporary world, and the search for new concepts arising from these critiques, have challenged the very notions of ethnography, culture and fieldwork (69). In this study I have retained them, principally because they do seem to be adequate to my limited purpose, and partly because I am not aware of superior alternatives.

initial members of my sample were located with the help of my partner, who was born and grew up in Guangzhou, and attended university there between 1998 and 2002. (She was not, however, a member of the sample, as she was not at the time fieldwork commenced a regular gongfu tea drinker.) While at university, my partner had befriended several students from Chaoshan. Through her network, I approached an initial set of seven people, all of whom were gongfu tea drinkers. The set comprised three men and four women, four of them currently living in Guangzhou, two in Chaoshan, and one in Fuzhou, capital of neighbouring Fujian province. In each case I indicated that I would like to come and talk with them about gongfu tea. All of them readily agreed. (More formally, once they had done so, I presented them with an Information Sheet and Consent Form, in Chinese, as stipulated by the ethics approval granted the project by University of New England.) The sample eventually grew to comprise 24 people, 16 of whom were born in Chaoshan, five in neighbouring Fujian province, and three in Guangzhou⁵. Of the 16 born in Chaoshan, five now lived in Guangzhou, the remaining 11 in Chaoshan. The network linkages through which my initial set of seven respondents ‘snowballed’ into a sample of 24 are depicted graphically in Figure 2.1. Each arrow in the diagram beyond the core group of seven arrows marks an instance in which a respondent introduced me to someone else whom he or she believed would be helpful to my inquiry.

⁵ One of the Chaoshan participants included here entered the study much later – in April 2017. He was a friend of one of my initial participants, and a gongfu tea enthusiast who became interested in my research and expressed a wish to be part of it.



Note: (1) The 'Starting person' was not one of the interviewees; (2) The four interviewees shown in darker circles were interviewed both in 2010 and again in 2012; (3) the person in the blue circle at the lower right was not added until 2016, but he is shown here because of the pathway through which he was recruited.

Figure 2-1: Structure of the initial 'snowball' sample (March 2010)

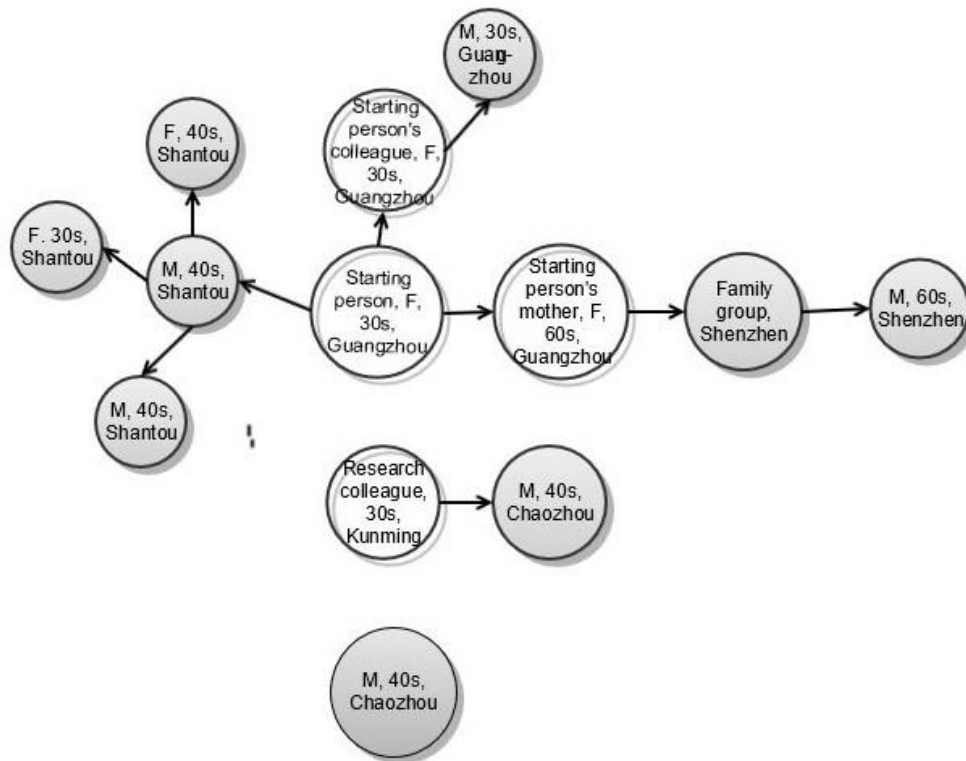
As Figure 2.1 shows, the initial set of seven participants were all aged in their 30s, exposing the snowball sample to a risk of being too homogenous with respect to age. However, as fieldwork progressed and linkages ramified, the range of ages broadened as, even more importantly, did the breadth of activities and experiences that I was fortunate enough to glimpse. Thus, for example, one of the women in the initial set (F, 30s, Guangzhou, in Fig. 2.1) introduced me to an older male work-colleague from Chaoshan, who in turn introduced me to a man in the city of Chaozhou who worked at a tea research institute dedicated, amongst other things, to introducing more scientific farming practices to local tea-growers. He in turn introduced me, firstly, to a tea-shop proprietor in Chaozhou, and also to a woman running a tea wholesaling business located in the nearby tea mountain township of Fenghuang (F, 40s, Fenghuang, in Figure 2.1). She in turn introduced me to a tea-grower high up on the slopes of Fenghuang mountain.

Most of the initial sample of 24 participants drank Chaoshan gongfu tea as everyday practice and several were also involved in producing or marketing gongfu tea. One member of the initial set of seven participants (M, 30s, Guangzhou) was included in the study because, though not from Chaoshan, he had developed a keen interest in gongfu tea

as a tea-art. So, too, had a third member of the core group who was not from Chaoshan (M, 30s, Fuzhou). The latter in turn provided a link into a Fuzhou-based cluster of participants that included the director of a province-wide tea culture association and a meeting with one of China's most celebrated tea masters – the 101 year old Zhang Tianfu – who has devoted more than 80 years to fostering, promoting and improving local tea production (and whose thoughts on the place of *chali* are quoted in the previous chapter).

In March 2012 I returned to Chaoshan, accompanied by my partner, to do some more fieldwork. I met again with four of the people I had interviewed in 2010. These are the four people shown in darker shading in the lower left area of Figure 2.1. I also interviewed four new participants in the city of Shantou. They are shown on the left hand side of Figure 2.2. At this time, I was particularly interested in interviewing non-Chaoshan people who had adopted gongfu tea modeled on the Chaoshan style. One of these was the husband of one of my partner's colleagues. He is shown at the top of Figure 2.2 (M, 30s, Guangzhou) . Through my partner's mother, I was also introduced to a family in Shenzhen who, as a family, had taken up Chaoshan-style gongfu tea. Because I met and interacted with them as a family, rather than a collection of individuals, I elected to treat them for analytical purposes as a single entity. They are shown in the circle second from the right in Figure 2.2. The Shenzhen family in turn introduced me to another Shenzhen man who had become an *afficionado* of gongfu tea – shown on the far right of Figure 2.2. Finally, I added two Chaozhou-based participants to the sample. One, whom I met through a Chinese colleague who is also interested in contemporary Chinese tea culture, was the proprietor of a wholesale tea business and co-author of several books on Chaoshan gongfu tea. The other was a retail tea-shop proprietor specializing in selling varieties of the locally produced Fenghuang Dancong tea much favoured by gongfu tea drinkers. The eight new participants and one family, and the linkages between them, are shown in Figure 2.2.

Between my second field visit in 2012 and writing this account I made two subsequent, shorter visits to Chaozhou, one in October 2014 for several days, and again in April 2017 for three days, both times accompanied by my wife. On each occasion, our intention was to catch up with friends made during the earlier fieldwork visits, rather than conduct further fieldwork for this study. As it turned out, however, much of our time was spent socializing over gongfu tea and talking about it. My study had generated interest among tea drinkers, and one of the members of my initial sample introduced me to several others who shared his interests. One of these expressed a wish to be included in the study. I honoured his interest by adding him to the sample.



Note: the four people shown in unshaded circles were not interviewed for the study, but provided links to others who were interviewed.

Figure 2-2: Structure of 2nd snowball sample (March 2012)

Together, these 32 individuals and one family constituted the sample upon which this study is largely based. As Table 2.1 shows, 22 of the participants were born and grew up in Chaoshan, while another five (including one family) were not Chaoshan-born, but had taken up drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea. These are the people who constitute the sample of gongfu tea drinkers in this study. A third group of participants shown in Table 2.1 consists of five residents of Fuzhou, capital of the neighbouring province of Fujian. As explained in the previous chapter, the southern part of Fujian Province shares with Chaoshan a common cultural and linguistic cultural heritage as part of the Minnan (闽南) region, and this extends to the drinking of gongfu tea. However, the gongfu tea drinking practices that I observed in Fuzhou, though similar to those I saw in Chaoshan, were not identical with the latter, and for this reason I have not included the Fuzhou respondents as exponents of Chaoshan gongfu tea. I interviewed them because they were referred to me through the process of snowball sampling as people who could - and did - enrich my understanding of regional tea culture traditions and practices, and some of their ideas and words have certainly helped to shape my analysis. The one remaining member of the sample – the fourth row in the table below - was a woman from Guangzhou who was not a regular gongfu tea drinker herself, but who served as a link to others who were gongfu tea drinkers.

Table 2-1: The study sample, and participants' connections with Chaoshan gongfu tea

Connection to Chaoshan gongfu tea	No of participants
Born and grew up in Chaoshan	22
From outside Chaoshan, adopted Chaoshan gongfu tea as a choice	5*
Fujian-born residents of Fuzhou, not categorized here as exponents of Chaoshan gongfu tea	5
Non-gongfu tea drinker who served as link to Chaoshan gongfu tea drinkers.	1
TOTAL	33

* Includes one family treated analytically as a single unit.

Interviews were semi-structured, and took place in settings of the participants' choice – their workplaces or their homes, sometimes my own hotel room, and sometimes – not frequently - in a tea-shop or tea-house. Most of those I interviewed chose a setting where they not only talked about gongfu tea but prepared and served it during the interview, thus creating a natural focal point for my questioning and observation. In all of the interviews, my goals were twofold: to understand participants' own experiences of drinking gongfu tea, and how these experiences fitted in with other parts of their lives, and the nature and extent of any changes in tea-drinking practices they had observed as a result of changes in the wider social environment. I used a set of guiding questions, which is reproduced here as Appendix B, but did not follow it slavishly. Rather, I tried to stimulate what Patton has called a 'guided conversation' (74). This is why I prefer to refer to the people I interviewed as participants rather than the more conventional research term 'respondents'. They were not just responding to my questions; they were *reflecting* on activities which in many cases were so thoroughly integrated into their daily routines that they had rarely, if ever, had occasion to reflect on them before. Using the tea-drinking occasion as a loom, as it were, I would weave in other lines of inquiry: changes that the interviewee had observed in gongfu tea-related practices in recent years; younger people's beverage preferences compared to their own; differences between drinking gongfu tea at home and in the workplace. I also explored associations between drinking gongfu tea and mental states and beliefs about the health-related effects of various kinds of gongfu tea.

In addition to arranged interviews, I also drew on observations, including several chance encounters in Chaoshan. One of the more rewarding aspects of studying Chaoshan gongfu tea – which I explore more analytically below - lies in the association between gongfu tea, sociability, and hospitality. Moreover, one of the favoured sites for enjoying gongfu tea,

especially outside busy times, is in shops, or just outside them on the pavement. As a result, upon showing any curiosity in people sitting and drinking gongfu tea, I was often invited to sit down and join them. Through such episodes I was able to experience for myself the ways in which gongfu tea imposes its own tempo and rhythms on the often stressful pace and demands of everyday life. To drink Chaoshan gongfu tea, as one of my informants put it, you have to slow down and taste the tea: ‘*manmande qu pincha*’ (慢慢的去品茶).

2.4 Conceptual frameworks: from consumption ritual to everyday practice

In order to grasp conceptually the domain of tea culture as a set of practices, I initially drew on Mary Douglas’s concept of ‘ritual’, conceptualizing gongfu tea as the performance in a pre-ordained manner and sequence of actions charged with symbolic meanings (44). Douglas and Isherwood subsequently distinguished ‘consumption rituals’ as a subset of the broader category, in order to examine consumption as a culturally coded activity through which participants not only addressed utilitarian needs but also accorded significance to particular events and social relationships (43). Conceptualizing gongfu tea as a consumption ritual directed me to exploring the practices involved in performing gongfu tea as an event, attributes of the settings in which these events occur, the relationships between these practices and settings and other domains of participants’ lives, and the *meaning* of participation in gongfu tea for participants.

Exploratory, qualitative research of the kind undertaken in this study does not usually follow a tidy linear sequence involving specifying research questions, collecting data, then analyzing data. Rather, conceptualization, data collection and data analysis begin simultaneously and continue to inform each other in an iterative process (75). The present study is no exception. Towards the end of my initial three-week fieldwork sojourn in Chaoshan in 2010, I began to see a pattern. For all of the differences to be found among individuals, it appeared, drinking gongfu tea among Chaoshan people had five properties (all of which I elaborate on in later chapters): firstly and most obviously, it served as a vehicle for expressing and sustaining relationships with family, friends and associates. Secondly, it helped to affirm people’s identity as *Chaoshan* people. Chaoshan people are conscious of the extent to which the centrality of gongfu tea in everyday life marks them out from other Chinese cultures, and generally, I believe, are proud of this distinction. Of course, it could be argued that evidence of this consciousness might have been an artifact of my questioning, but I shall argue that there is ample evidence of Chaoshan people making this point for themselves, quite apart from any responses to prompting from me. Thirdly, gongfu tea has an important aesthetic dimension, both in fostering attentive

appreciation of the taste, colour and aroma of the tea, and in requiring attention to detail in preparing and serving the tea. Fourthly, the various kinds of tea used in making gongfu tea – in particular semi-fermented Oolong teas and *pu er* tea – are perceived as being beneficial to health. Finally, drinking gongfu tea is valued for fostering particular mental states. As one respondent put it: “*He cha, he dao yiding de jingjie jiu shi yi zhong xinjing .*”(“喝茶，喝到一定的境界就是一种心境。 ”). ‘When you drink tea you will certainly attain a particular state of mind’. The labels given to the ‘state of mind’ varied, with several respondents alluding to a gentle stimulating effect, accompanied – paradoxical though it may seem – with a relaxing, slowing down effect. The five properties are summarized in Table 2.2.

Table 2-2: Summary of properties of drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea

Property	Description
Sustaining social relationships	Chaoshan gongfu tea expresses and nurtures relationships with family, friends and associates
Affirming identity	Chaoshan gongfu tea helps to affirm drinkers’ identity as members of a historically distinct cultural community.
Aesthetic dimension	Chaoshan gongfu tea fosters attention to taste, aroma, colour of tea, and to proper procedures for preparing, serving and drinking gongfu tea, and for appropriate equipment and settings.
Health benefits	Various teas used for Chaoshan gongfu tea are perceived to have beneficial health effects.
Mental benefits	Drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea fosters particular states of mind.

Once identified, these five properties provided a framework, both for exploring more systematically the data I had already collected, and for helping to focus ongoing data gathering.

As indicated above, in March 2012 I returned to Chaoshan to conduct further fieldwork, during the course of which I became concerned with what seemed to me to be a limitation of the ‘consumption ritual’ concept. Defining gongfu tea as a ritual directed emphasis to the performance of pre-ordained actions in a pre-ordained sequence. Chaoshan gongfu tea, in my observation, involves both, but it also entails, as I became aware through my fieldwork, a high degree of *creativity*, particularly but by no means exclusively among those who have taken up gongfu tea as a form of tea art. While Chaoshan tea drinkers,

and other practitioners of Chaoshan-style gongfu tea, pride themselves on following proper procedures – on being, as they say, *jiangjiu* (讲究) – they do not, in doing so, slavishly follow some sort of secular liturgy. *How* they fashion the pre-ordained components of a session of preparing and serving gongfu tea into an occasion that satisfies the participants, and also fits in with other demands on the host’s time and other resources, is a matter that calls for considerable skill and discretion on the host’s part. The concept of a ‘consumption ritual’, in my view, does not accord due recognition to this more creative aspect of gongfu tea as a set of practices. In reflecting on how best to conceptualize this aspect, I turned to Michel de Certeau’s conceptualization of ‘everyday practice’ (76). De Certeau’s key insight – that the practices that people deploy in appropriating and utilizing cultural objects constitute in themselves an act of production as well as consumption – resonated with what I was observing among the gongfu tea drinkers around me, and in turn led me to adopting his analytical framework for examining everyday practices. Derived from the analysis of speech acts in linguistics, the framework distinguishes four properties of everyday practices: firstly, they take place within a system of symbolic meanings, some of which – and this is the second property – the consumer/practitioner appropriates for the particular occasion; thirdly, the practice is a communicative act establishing or in some other way signifying a relationship with another, and finally, the event is situated in a particular time and place (76, p.33).

Thus, while I did not abandon the notion of ‘consumption ritual’ as a framework for observing practices associated with Chaoshan gongfu tea, as the study progressed I came to see these practices less as a ‘ritual’ and more as an instance of everyday practice in de Certeau’s sense. In addition, other analytical concepts emerged as I endeavoured to interpret and reflect on the data collected. These are introduced later in the dissertation.

2.5 Data analysis: managing and interpreting data

Qualitative fieldwork is notorious for generating large amounts of messy data: interview recordings, notes on interviews, ideas jotted down in notebooks, notes drawn from literature, photographs, and so on. Managing and bringing order to the mess is an essential precondition for analysis proper, which usually proceeds by means of coding the data, and then grouping the codes in a manner that leads eventually to some sort of descriptive or explanatory model.

I recorded some but not all interviews, the decision whether or not to do so being governed, firstly, by what seemed most appropriate under the circumstances. If in my judgement recording would not be intrusive in the context, I would ask the person concerned whether they were happy for me to record the conversation. Most of those I asked agreed, although

a few indicated that they would prefer not to be recorded. In the case of unrecorded interviews, I made brief notes *in situ* using a pocket notebook, and then expanded on these at the first available opportunity.

I listened to my interview recordings – most of them several times - and made literal transcripts of some parts, notes on other parts. These documents, together with notes on unrecorded interviews, notes on observations, notes on readings, and photographs, were then entered into the qualitative data analysis program HyperRESEARCH™ 3.7.3 (77) for help in coding and analysis.

‘Codes’ in qualitative research are not numbers or letters that allocate phenomena into unambiguous, mutually exclusive categories – eg (1) = male; (2) = female - but rather labels that assign meaning to segments of data (78). A code is assigned to a segment of data because the analyst believes that the segment has descriptive or explanatory significance. As Caudle (78) notes, codes are typically derived from one of two sources: firstly, they can be brought by the analyst to the data prior to analysis commencing . For example, I was interested in the *settings* in which gongfu tea was consumed, so I created codes that revealed aspects of settings, such as ‘Drinking gongfu tea in the home’, under which I marked all reference to consumption at home. Secondly, codes can be derived inductively from the data, sometimes using the words or phrases of respondents themselves. For example, several of my Chaoshan respondents, when talking about drinking gongfu tea, used the phrase ‘*shenghuo de yi bu fen*’ (生活的一部分) to indicate that gongfu tea did not so much occupy a separate domain in their world as an integral part of everyday life: it was ‘part of our lives’. I used the phrase ‘*shenghuo de yi bu fen*’ as a code, partly because the phrase itself conveyed more than I could expect to capture by means of any paraphrase.

The coding and analysis process comprised four steps: first, coding all segments of data that appeared relevant, either because they illuminated *a priori* analytical concepts such as ‘setting’ or because they promised to cast light on the questions for which I was seeking answers. Second, the codes resulting from this process were sifted and sorted to eliminate duplication, and in some cases merged to produce a more ordered set of fewer codes. Thirdly (although this process was conducted iteratively throughout the whole analysis sequence, rather than as a step in a linear order of steps), codes were checked against the data to gauge the extent to which they were supported by examples from the data. Finally – and again, the actual process was less linear than this account implies – by considering the relationships between codes, descriptive and explanatory frameworks were derived as foundations for the accounts in the following chapters.

2.6 Limitations

The study has a number of significant limitations. Most obviously, it is an outsider's view of Chaoshan gongfu tea. I am not Chinese and, while I am continuing to study the language, I am far from fluent in Putonghua, and completely ignorant of the local Chaoshan dialect. In all of the interviews and quite a lot of the observations, I was assisted by my partner, who as a Chinese woman born and brought up in Guangzhou was able to communicate in Putonghua, although she neither speaks nor understands Chaoshan dialect.

I have tried to offset these limitations as far as possible by feeding back my observations and interpretations to research participants, and discussing them with participants, often through prolonged sessions of drinking gongfu tea. In 2013, I presented a paper at an international colloquium on cultural representations of tea and coffee, held at Université Lumières in Lyon, France (79). This paper, which represents an early attempt to describe some of the findings from the study, has subsequently been read by several people from Chaoshan, who have commented favourably.

The study also exhibits the limitations of a small, exploratory, qualitative study. It has, I hope, identified a number of relevant social processes at work, and cast light both on the continuities and the changes that give shape to Chaoshan gongfu tea in a changing world, but it does not enable me to quantify processes, continuities or changes. Finally, two other limitations should at least be noted: first, all of my fieldwork occurred in urban settings; the study has nothing to say about the place of Chaoshan gongfu tea in rural communities. Second, as a man conducting research in an area of activity where men often, but do not always, take a leading role – especially in preparing gongfu tea – I have paid less attention than I should have done to the extent to which, and ways in which, gongfu tea may be a gendered activity. Such is hindsight.

2.7 Summary

This study examines contemporary Chaoshan gongfu tea, both as a cultural object represented in discourses, and as everyday practice, both within and outside the Chaoshan region. The methodological approach taken is that of theory-driven, sociological ethnography, in which the field of inquiry is defined not by a bounded geographical entity but, conceptually, by relevance to the research questions. For fieldwork, a snowball sample of drinkers of Chaoshan gongfu tea drinkers was generated, consisting of 32 individuals and a family which, for reasons explained above, was regarded analytically as a single unit. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations.

Conceptually, the examination of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a social practice draws on two main sources: Douglas and Isherwood's concept of a 'consumption ritual', and de Certeau's model of everyday practice.

3. Chaoshan gongfu tea as a ‘living fossil’ (活化石): the creation of a literary discourse

Today’s Chaozhou gongfu tea is a contemporary expression of the oldest form of Chinese gongfu tea, a ‘living fossil’, an extension into the present of the ‘jiancha’ tea-making method set out in the *Cha Jing* (80, p. 9)⁶.

Chaozhou gongfu tea, according to this interpretation of history, represents a unique embodiment in our own time of the principles of tea art first set out in the oldest extant account of Chinese tea culture, namely the *Cha Jing* (*Classic of Tea*) written in the 8th century AD, during the Tang Dynasty, by Lu Yu. Chaozhou gongfu tea is a synthesis (*ji dacheng* 集大成) of the whole Chinese tea culture tradition: ‘Chaozhou gongfu tea, Chinese gongfu tea, Chinese *chadao*, are in essence a three-in-one trinity’⁷ (80, p. 23) .

These claims are part of a modern literary discourse about Chaoshan gongfu tea to be found in monographs and academic and other articles. As I shall show, these claims are also contested. In this chapter I examine the emergence of a modern literary discourse that represents Chaoshan gongfu tea as a ‘living fossil’ (*huohuashi*), then look at these claims in the light of critical scrutiny. Finally, I shall consider the implications for an inquiry into the place of Chaoshan gongfu tea in Chaoshan today.

The most detailed argument for regarding contemporary Chaozhou gongfu tea as a ‘living fossil’ embodying the ancient traditions of Tang Dynasty Chinese tea culture is put forward by Chen Xiangbai and Chen Shulin (80). They assert that gongfu tea was already established in China at the time of the Tang Dynasty (CE 618-907), but it did not come to be called gongfu tea for another thousand years. This assertion is based on their comparison between the steps involved in preparing, pouring and drinking tea as described in Lu Yu’s *Cha Jing* and their own description of the steps involved in Chaozhou gongfu tea today. Chen and Chen acknowledge the differences between the two sets of procedures: for example, most tea in Lu Yu’s time was manufactured in the form of tea-cakes which, before being used for brewing, had to be roasted, cooled, then ground into a powder, whereas contemporary gongfu tea, in keeping with most contemporary tea-drinking styles, utilizes loose-leaf tea, which is steeped in boiled water to form an infusion. Lu Yu advocated adding a pinch of salt to the boiling water

⁶ 今之潮州工夫茶，实乃中国工夫茶的最古老型种遗存，是古代工夫茶的“活化石”，是《茶经》工夫茶艺（也即“煎茶法”）的延伸。

⁷ 潮州工夫茶是中国茶道之集大成者；潮州工夫茶、中国工夫茶、中国茶道，实质三位一体。

immediately prior to the tea powder being added, something not associated with gongfu tea today (although it is still added to tea in some parts of China). Despite these and other differences, Chen and Chen insist that there is a continuity in the ‘essence’ (conveyed in one instance by *shizhi* 实质 in another by *jinghua* 精华) of Chinese tea culture which has been preserved in Chaozhou gongfu tea. This continuity of essence, moreover, is said to have survived the transformations in the practices of manufacturing, preparing and drinking tea, such as the whisking of tea powder in tea contests (*doucha* 斗茶) that became popular during the Song Dynasty (CE 960 – 1279) (2, 7, 17).

According to Chen and Chen, Lu Yu's method of preparing tea (known as *jian chafa* 煎茶法 or boiling tea method) was the prototype or 'bud' (*quanyu* 权舆) of Chinese gongfu tea (80, p. 39), and the changes introduced over the millennium covered by the five succeeding dynasties, steps in a natural evolutionary process. The authors derive further support for their thesis from the earliest known literary reference to Chaoshan gongfu tea, by the Qing Dynasty writer Yu Jiao (俞蛟), who between 1793 and 1800 worked as an official in Guangdong. He recorded his observations in a book entitled *Meng'an za zhu: Chao Jia Fengyue* (梦厂杂著.潮嘉风月) (81)⁸. Yu Jiao described gongfu tea as ‘a method of preparing tea, based on Lu Yu’s *Cha Jing*, but using even more refined utensils’⁹.

This was the only reference that Yu Jiao made to Lu Yu. He did not elaborate on the connection he perceived between Chaoshan gongfu tea and Lu Yu’s *jian cha* method, nor did he adduce any evidence in support of it. Much of his account consists of descriptions of the various utensils deployed, such as the charcoal-burning stove used to boil the water, the tea plate on which the tea was prepared; teapots, cups, the fan used to accelerate heating, and so on. His description of tea preparation itself is brief:

First put the spring water into a container, then use small fine charcoal to bring it to a ‘first bubbles’ boil; put Fujian tea into the pot, pour in water, place the lid on the pot, pour water over the lid, then pour the tea out, and sip it¹⁰.

Although Yu Jiao did not attempt to explain the connection between the two sets of tea-

⁸ The title translates – approximately – as ‘Miscellaneous Writings about Chaozhou’.

⁹ ‘工夫茶烹治之法，本诸陆羽《茶经》而器具更为精致。’ (cited in 81, p. 102)

¹⁰ ‘先将泉水贮铛，用细炭煮至初沸，投闽茶于壶内冲之，盖定复遍浇其上，然后斟而细呷之。’ (Yu Jiao, cited in 81, p. 103)

drinking practices separated, even in his time, by a thousand years, Chen and Chen claim to do so. Using the geographical concept of 'centre and periphery' (*zhongxinqu yu waiwei qu*), they situate their explanation in the period of the Northern Song Dynasty (CE [960 - 1127](#)), when political and economic power in China was centred in the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region. Following the move of the capital to Hangzhou in response to invasions from the north, and the commencement of the Southern Song Dynasty (CE 1127 - 1279), the centre of economic activities, according to Chen and Chen, also moved south, and with it, cultural activities generated by the relative prosperity of the times. They claim that gongfu tea was already well established at this time and that, as a result of the southward shifts in commercial activities, it spread also to the region of southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong Province - the area of which modern Chaoshan is part - which became the 'periphery' of the Jiangzhe region. By the final decades of the Qing Dynasty, towards the end of the 19th century, economic and commercial activity in the Chaoshan area had become highly developed, with a result that Chaoshan businesspeople travelled far and wide, taking their gongfu tea-drinking practices with them wherever they went. As a result, Chaoshan gongfu tea became known beyond its own borders (51).

Meanwhile, in the course of the Ming Dynasty (CE 1368 -1644) and the first part of the Qing Dynasty that succeeded it (CE 1644 - 1912), according to Chen and Chen, gongfu tea died out in the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region, leaving it flourishing only in the southern Fujian - eastern Guangdong area. It was for this reason, according to this argument, that the practices and utensils of gongfu tea that Yu Jiao came upon in Chaozhou late in the 18th century were a novelty to him. Yu Jiao did not know that gongfu tea had previously flourished in the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region.

The claim that contemporary Chaoshan gongfu tea embodies the intrinsic spirit – *guyou jinghua* (固有精华) – of Lu Yu's *jiancha fa* is also advanced by Xu and Li (54), who describe the *jiancha* method as the first prototype (*zui chu xingshi* 最初形式) of contemporary gongfu tea (54, p. 47). The 'essence' of both traditions of tea-drinking, they assert, is to be found in three commonly shared characteristics. Firstly, Chaoshan gongfu tea, like Lu Yu's *jiancha* tea, is complex and refined (*fanfu, kaojiu* 繁复, 考究), in the attention paid to issues such as selecting suitable water, boiling the water to precisely the right degree, and following the prescribed steps in rinsing tea-leaves, and removing froth from the surface of the tea. Secondly, Chaoshan gongfu tea according to Xu and Li has inherited the characteristic of simplicity (*chaxing jian* 茶性俭) associated with Lu Yu's *jiancha* method. If this appears to contradict the first characteristic, it should be noted that 'simplicity' here implies being unadorned with extraneous or decorative elements. In the case of both *jiancha* tea and Chaoshan gongfu tea, the ingredients are simple: tea, water,

and containers for preparation and drinking, and the skill lies in bringing out to the full their essential properties. Thirdly, Xu and Li contend, Chaoshan gongfu tea has inherited ancient gongfu tea’s spiritual qualities of harmony (*he* 和), respect (*jing* 敬) and joy (*le* 乐)¹¹. These are displayed, for example, in the quiet, decorous but relaxed way in which gongfu tea is shared with newly arrived guests.

The modern manifestation in Chaoshan of this ancient tradition, according to these accounts, is a highly codified, elaborate ritual for brewing and drinking tea. Chen and Chen (80) list 18 steps in preparing Chaoshan gongfu tea, plus another three prescribing how the tea should be drunk. Many of these steps involve the use of specialized utensils, and all are properly accomplished with prescribed gestures. Some of them – such as the use of an earthenware stove and clay pot for heating the water (steps 3 and 4) – have a distinctly archaic flavor. The 21 steps are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3-1: The steps in preparing traditional Chaoshan gongfu tea

Step	Interpretation
1. 茶具讲示 (<i>cha ju jiang shi</i>)	The teamaster presents/displays the tea set to the guests.
2. 茶师净手 (<i>cha shi jing shou</i>)	Tea master washes his/her hands.
3. 泥炉生火 (<i>nilu sheng huo</i>)	Light the earthenware stove (traditionally used to heat water for the tea pot)
4 沙铫掏水 (<i>shadiao tao shui</i>)	Put water into the clay pot (i.e. the functional equivalent of a modern kettle).
5. 榄炭煮水 (<i>lantanzhu shui</i>)	Heat the water using olive-shaped charcoal pellets.
6. 开水热罐 (<i>kai shui re guan</i>)	Boil water to heat the (tea)pot.
7. 再热茶盅 (<i>zai re cha zhong</i>)	Then use water to heat the tea-cups.
8. 茗倾素纸 (<i>ming qing su zhi</i>)	Pour tea-leaves onto a plain piece of paper (prior to putting them into the pot).
9. 壶纳乌龙 (<i>hu na wu long</i>)	Put the Oolong (tea) into the teapot.
10. 甘泉洗茶 (<i>ganquan xi cha</i>)	With sweet and refreshing spring water wash the tea-leaves. (i.e. pour water from teapot, with first brew of tea in it, to wash the cups and at the same time wash the tea.)
11. 提铫高冲 (<i>ti diao gao chong</i>)	Raise kettle and pour from high (i.e. a second pouring of water into the teapot).

¹¹ “最后，潮汕工夫茶继承古代工夫茶‘和、敬、乐’的品茶精神。” (54, p. 48)

12. 壶盖刮沫 (<i>hu gai gua mo</i>)	With the pot lid remove froth/bubbles (from the surface of the tea).
13. 淋盖去沫 (<i>lin gai qu mo</i>)	Drench the lid to remove froth/bubbles. i.e. by pouring hot water over the lid.
14. 汤杯, 滚杯 (<i>tang bei, gun bei</i>)	Heat cups, roll cups (wash the cups by quickly rotating them in hot water - a special skill if one is to avoid scalding one's fingers).
15. 低洒茶汤 (<i>di sa cha tang</i>)	Slowly pour tea - i.e. really pouring tea into the cups this time.
16. 关公巡城 (<i>Guan Gong xun cheng</i>)	Guan Gong patrols the city. Guan Gong was a Han dynasty general. In practical terms, this step involves distributing the tea evenly among all the participants' cups.
17. 韩信点兵 (<i>Han Xin dian bing</i>)	Han Xin counts the troops. Another reference to a famous Qin-Han dynasty general. It refers to the practice of ensuring that the last drops from the teapot are distributed evenly among the cups.
18. 敬请品味 (<i>jing qing pin wei</i>)	Respectfully invite guests to savour the taste/aroma.
19. 先闻茶香 (<i>xian wen cha xiang</i>)	First, smell the aroma of the tea.
20. 和气细啜 (<i>he qi xi chuo</i>)	In a friendly manner, carefully sip the tea.
21. 三嗅杯底, 瑞气圆融 (<i>san xiu bei di, rui qi yuan rong</i>)	Smell the bottom of the cup, in an auspicious blending.

Source: (80)

This refined procedure, according to another writer, constitutes an 'integrated ceremony encompassing the reflected spirit, the etiquette, the skills of both making tea and pouring tea for guests, and the appraisal of the quality of the tea' (10, p. 124). And yet, refined though these practices may be, they are not, according to Wang, confined to rich families. On the contrary, in Chaoshan one comes upon gongfu tea being made among street vendors, in workshops, on farms, as well as in urban homes, hotels and restaurants. Chaoshan gongfu tea, according to Wang, is integral to maintaining social relationships at the most mundane, everyday level. At the same time, she states, it contains a deep and profound inner content, combining the etiquette and depth of the Confucian spirit with highly refined tea art.

To quote from the English version of her work, Chaoshan gongfu tea embodies 'the

complete unity of the spiritual and the material as well as of form and content, the philosophy of the co-existence of smallness and bigness, cleverness and clumsiness, falseness and truth, and waxing and waning, the Chinese people's pursuit of a happy and rich life and spirit of sharing joys and sorrows' (10, p. 129).¹²

3.1 Chaoshan gongfu tea on the internet

In recent years, Chaoshan gongfu tea has also been shaped as a cultural object by the electronic media, and through these drawn into the world of globalized commodities. For example, in Huang Jianfeng's nostalgic *Discussion about Chaoshan Gongfu Tea Culture*, which originally appeared in 2006 on the website www.sina.com in a collection of articles on culture and education (*Xin Lang Wen Jiao* 新浪文教), gongfu tea is a symbol if not metaphor for a way of life that the author has left behind (82). The essay takes the form of a personal reflection rather than a scholarly analysis, written by someone born and raised in Chaoshan who now, like so many other Chaoshan natives, lives elsewhere – in this case in the city of Guangzhou. The author begins by recounting, in lyrical vein, the central place of gongfu tea in everyday Chaoshan life and culture.

In Chaoshan, every household has a gongfu tea set, and will enthusiastically prepare gongfu tea, usually the family together, or when friends come from afar¹³.

Everyone in Chaoshan, he continues, whether man or woman, young or old, is a master in the art of making and appreciating gongfu tea:

... no matter who, all know how to 'pour the water from high, the tea from a low height', first performing 'Guan Gong patrols the city' and then comes 'Han Xin musters the troops'; these tea-making techniques are thoroughly traditional¹⁴.

Both of these metaphors evoke the attention to detail (*jiangjiu*) entailed in Chaoshan gongfu tea (for the reference to Guan Gong and Han Xin, see Table 3.1 above). Refinement in the preparation of Chaoshan gongfu tea is matched by elegance in the

¹² The original, Chinese text in the 2009 edition of her book reads:“。。有精神与物质、形式与内容的完整统一；有小中见大、巧中见拙、虚实盈亏的哲理；有中华儿女对生的圆满、充实和同甘共苦理想精神的追求。” (11, p. 117)

¹³ 在潮汕，家家户户都有一套功夫茶具，平时家人一起或者有朋自远方来，都会热情地冲起功夫茶的。

¹⁴ ...不管是谁，都会“高斟低酌”，先是“关公巡城”，然后“韩信点兵”起来，冲茶的手法绝对传统。

utensils used. The author describes the small but wide-bellied, purple clay teapot favoured by Chaoshan tea-drinkers, surrounded by four small, delicate tea cups.

Nostalgia for the author's home-town is fostered by evoking the 'intoxicating' fragrance of the strong, rich tea he prepares in his current home, his wellbeing nourished by watching the dry, withered tea-leaves uncurl as they absorb the water:

The tea smiles; I smile.

Ah! Life, I too am a withered tea-leaf; here for me is a steaming hot space that lets me unfurl, lets me give out a dense flavour (82) ¹⁵.

Before concluding this happy reverie, however, the author talks also of the threats to the practices of gongfu tea posed by the tempo of contemporary life. He describes a fellow exile from Chaoshan, a shopkeeper who, like the author, lives now in Guangzhou, and who has a gongfu teaset in front of his shop, but who doesn't change the tea-leaves from morning till night because, he explains to the author, he simply doesn't have the time.

Since its original publication, Huang Jianfeng's essay has appeared in its entirety on at least two other websites. The first, where it was drawn to my attention in March 2013, is a commercial website promoting various textile manufacturers in the Chaoshan region¹⁶. The text appears alongside pictorial advertisements for ti-shirts and pyjamas. In this case the original source and the author's name are both clearly shown. The second site is a blog of someone with the pen-name of Xi Fanmian (唏饭)¹⁷. Here, the entire passage is reproduced with no acknowledgement of either the author or source, the implication presumably intended to be that the blogger wrote the piece himself.

The internet and associated electronic media have also provided a platform for representing gongfu tea modelled on contemporary practice in Chaoshan as a 'traditional' Chinese 'tea ceremony'. As Kim and Zhang (83) observe, representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea have permeated beyond China, into contemporary transnational 'tea culture'

¹⁵ 茶笑，我也笑。哦，生活，我也是一片干枯的茶叶，给我一个热腾腾的环境，让我舒展，让我散发出浓浓的香郁。

¹⁶ <http://www.cyxxg.com/csgfc/pcyg/25085250965.html> (retrieved 10 March 2013). The page is no longer accessible on this page (as of May 2017).

¹⁷ <http://tieba.baidu.com/p/1606362534> (retrieved 24 May 2017).

discourses fostered both by tea enthusiasts and commercial interests, to convey not merely a way of preparing and drinking tea, but what they label as a ‘language’ for transmitting notions of a distinctively Chinese tea culture tradition, even, in some representations, a Chinese ‘tea ceremony’ to stand alongside the much better known Japanese tea ceremony, or *chanoyu*. For example, in the city of Brisbane, Australia (where I am writing this), the Chat Tea café offers a ‘traditional Chinese tea ceremony’. The enthusiastic response of one reviewer offers a glimpse into the way in which ‘traditions’ can be created and nurtured in a global marketplace. After informing the reader that the tea she was served was a ‘high mountain *pu-er* tea’, she writes:

The tea was served as part of a traditional Chinese tea ceremony – it was so intricate with so many small steps that I don’t think I’ll ever be able to remember all of it! The ceremony lasted approximately 5 minutes – I was enthralled by it. Despite being of Chinese descent, and being 23 years old, I had yet to experience anything as traditional as Chat Tea’s tea ceremony¹⁸.

In another suburb of the same city, the Chung Tian Buddhist temple offers regular training sessions in ‘the art of Tea Ceremony’ as well as what it calls ‘DIY Tea Ceremony’ sessions, the former at \$5 per person for a one hour session, the latter at \$15 per table, with a maximum of five persons per table¹⁹.

In short, the tea-drinking practices known as Chaoshan gongfu tea have, through a variety of discursive pathways, come to be represented as a cultural object that embodies an ancient tradition of tea culture that dates back over 1,000 years to the Tang Dynasty, that expresses not simply a regional cultural tradition, but the ‘essence’ of a national Chinese tea culture and even, in some depictions, an authentic Chinese ‘tea ceremony’. How should we view these claims?

3.2 Critical perspectives: an invented tradition?

The claim is flatly rejected by two commentators - Kim and Zhang (83) - who contend that tea prepared according to Lu Yu’s prescriptions – with the tea being ground to a powder and boiled, often (though Lu Yu himself made it clear he did not approve of this) with the addition of ginger, salt and other condiments – would not even be recognized as tea by most Chinese tea drinkers today, whether in Chaoshan or anywhere else. The

¹⁸ www.weekendnotes.com/traditional-chinese-tea-ceremony-cha-tea (retrieved 16 November 2016).

¹⁹ www.chungtian.org.au/tea-ceremony/ (retrieved 16 November 2016).

claimed historical continuity between Lu Yu and modern day Chaoshan gongfu tea is, they argue, an example of an ‘invented tradition’ in the sense in which that term was coined by Hobsbawm and Ranger (47) to refer a set of practices, normally of a ritualistic or symbolic nature, which are held to embody a continuous link with ancient historical traditions, the link however, being ‘largely factitious’. Traditions in this sense are ‘invented’ out of existing material and symbolic components by those who have reasons – often political or ideological – for enshrining existing practices with an aura of antiquity, often at times of rapid social change. Invented traditions need not be fabrications *de novo*; the practices in question may derive from long-standing customs. What is distinctive about an invented tradition is the interpretation of these practices and customs as contemporary manifestations of a continuous tradition, projected into a past beyond the reach of available historical evidence.

Kim and Zhang (2012) identify additional processes originating outside the People’s Republic of China that have helped to elevate Chaoshan gongfu tea to its current prominence. The 1970s saw the emergence in Taiwan of a modern form of Chinese ‘tea art’. In a context where the Taiwanese saw themselves as guardians of traditional Chinese culture against the depredations of Communists on the mainland, and where some in Taiwan had begun to seek an authentically Chinese alternative to the lure of Western beverages such as ‘Coke’ and ‘Sprite’ (19), a movement developed dedicated to establishing ‘tea art houses’ as places offering both refuge from urban stresses and a place for exploring cultural and ethnic identities. Out of this movement grew a meld of Japanese and Chinese cultural influences, with the favoured teas being drawn from the *Oolong* teas grown through Taiwan, Fujian and Chaoshan, and the favoured method of preparing tea being a ‘small cup’ style based on Chaoshan gongfu tea (84). In the process, Chaoshan-style gongfu tea came to be regarded, not as one among many Chinese regional traditions of preparing and drinking tea, but as Chinese tea art *per se* (83).

In criticizing representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a *huohuashi* inherited from the time of Lu Yu, Kim and Zhang argue that not only are such representations based on speculation in place of sound historical research, but also that they implicitly downplay the interplay of Taiwanese and Japanese influences alongside Chinese influences in the emergence of contemporary tea culture both within and beyond China, creating instead a narrative in which China is the sole source of modern tea culture traditions, with Lu Yu as the fount of all knowledge.

Not surprisingly, the depiction of gongfu tea as a ‘Chinese tea ceremony’ has not gone unchallenged on the internet. An article in Wikipedia entitled ‘Gongfu tea ceremony’, for

example, has spawned a vigorous debate about whether the term ‘ceremony’ should be used at all in this context, with some suggesting that the label is simply a product of the commercial exploitation of Chinese cultural practices, and of the gullibility of tourists keen to see displays of ‘tradition’²⁰.

Certainly, as Kim and Zhang argue, accounts of the ‘living fossil’ or *huohuashi* thesis are conspicuously reticent about drawing on historical researches, preferring to rely instead on postulating the transmission of an intangible ‘essence’ of tea culture as an explanatory mechanism – an essence that is somehow transmitted across generations and dynasties, across changes in the techniques used to manufacture and brew tea, and in the contexts in which it is consumed. To clarify what is implied in these assertions, it is helpful to distinguish analytically between three dimensions of tea-related practices that may or may not change over a given period. These are:

1. Constraints arising from the botanical and pharmacological properties of the tea plant; put simply, a tea leaf is not a coffee bean or a wine grape. In order to make any sort of beverage from tea-leaves, certain basic processes must be observed, and these, while not unique to making tea, set certain boundaries defining what can and cannot be done. Any changes that may occur in tea growing or tea production methods over time are constrained by these boundaries
2. Techniques, procedures, utensils used to grow, prepare, brew and drink tea. These are subject to the constraints above, but are known to vary from place to place and over time. Many such changes are well documented in the literature about tea in China and elsewhere in the world.
3. Symbolic meanings and values that are ascribed culturally to activities associated with producing, preparing and consuming tea. These too vary from place to place and over time, and have also been the subject of extensive documentation.

A proper analysis of continuity and change in the evolution of any particular style of drinking tea, including Chaoshan gongfu tea, requires attention to each of these dimensions - to ways in which the dimensions may vary independently of each other, or constrain each other. Seen in this light, the invocation of an unchanging ‘essence’ of tea culture, I suggest, is a way of *not* distinguishing them, but rather of conflating them, in a way that is analytically unhelpful.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Gongfu_tea_ceremony (retrieved 22 November 2016).

A less speculative account of the origins and development of Chaoshan gongfu tea, that draws on historical evidence, is that of Huang Ting (81). Like Kim and Zhang, Huang argues that the origins are more recent than the Tang Dynasty. He associates the origins of Chaoshan gongfu tea with two key antecedents. The first was a change in methods of making tea that came to prominence during the Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644) following a decision by Emperor Taizu to do away with the practice of making tea cakes, on the grounds that the method was too labour intensive and in any case vitiated the natural flavours of tea, and replace tea cakes with loose tea-leaves. The change led producers and consumers of tea alike to pay more attention to the flavours and other properties of particular kinds of tea-leaves, and to ways of processing tea-leaves and brewing tea to bring out these properties. One consequence was the introduction of small lidded cups – called *gaiwan* (盖碗) – for drinking tea, and of small teapots and teacups that lent themselves to attentive tea-tasting. By the time of the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods in the Qing Dynasty (i.e. between AD 1736-1820), tea drinking using small teapots and teacups had become popular through northern and southern Fujian province, and in the Chaoshan area of eastern Guangdong province. Huang suggests that, although this style of drinking had not yet come to be called ‘gongfu tea’, it resembled it in all but name.

The second impetus identified by Huang was the adoption, early in the 18th century, of a new method for preparing a semi-fermented tea known as *Yan cha* (岩茶) in the Wuyi Mountain region of Fujian province. The innovation involved applying a high temperature firing to ‘kill’ the fermentation process at a particular point, thereby giving the producer greater control over the final product. The process, known as *Songluo* (松萝) after its putative place of origin in Anhui province, was already in use for production of unfermented green teas such as Longjing tea (from Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province). The earliest reference to its use in Wuyi for making semi-fermented tea dates from an account by Wang Caotang (王草堂) written in 1717. Applied to Wuyi *Yan cha*, the process involved the following stages: first, the newly picked tea-leaves are spread out (*tan* 摊) on bamboo trays to dry in the sun, after which they are taken indoors and repeatedly shaken about by hand (*fanfu yaodong* 反复摇动). Through this process, the edges of the leaves start to become red, an indicator that they have become lightly fermented (or, more accurately, oxidized) (*qingwei fajiao* 轻微发酵), and the aroma starts to come out. Part of the skill of a good tea maker lies in knowing just how far, and over what length of time, to allow this process to continue. At this point, the leaves are put into a pot or wok and heated (the word used is *chao* (炒) which is usually translated as ‘fry’ or ‘stir-fry’; however, no oils are used in this process), at the same time being further ‘massaged’ (*rou* 揉). The final stage involves putting the leaves into a ‘baking cage’ (*bei*

long 焙笼) for drying (*honggan* 烘干). The product of this sequence is known as raw tea (*mao cha* 毛茶). Further drying in the *bei long* transforms it into ‘ripe tea’ – *shou cha* (熟茶). It is now ready to be sold to a wholesaler.

As Wang Caotang observed in his 1717 account, and as later writers also remarked, this process was more complex than those used for making green tea, and required considerable skill on the part of the producer. It was in this context that the label ‘gongfu’ (工夫), meaning both a high level of skill and a process requiring time, came to be applied to it. Following its introduction for making Wuyi *Yan cha*, the technique spread in popularity into other tea-producing areas of Fujian and eastern Guangdong province, along the way ushering in a variety of new teas that came to be known, collectively, as Oolong teas. Production of Oolong teas for export also grew.

Thus, in the first instance, the term ‘gongfu’ signified a particular technique for the production of refined Oolong teas. By the end of the 18th century, however, as we have already seen, it was being used to refer to the *style* of preparing and drinking that had become popular, especially in the Chaoshan region – that is, using small teapots and small cups to enjoy one or other type of Oolong tea. This is the usage that has survived.

As both Huang and Kim and Zhang observe, the generation of a literary discourse celebrating Chaoshan gongfu tea is of even more recent origin, and can be traced back to an essay written in 1957 – but not published at the time – by the Chaozhou-born scholar Weng Huidong (翁辉东). Prior to this time, according to Huang, there had been numerous literary references to Chaoshan gongfu tea, but Weng Huidong was the first to systematically codify the processes involved in preparing and serving Chaoshan gongfu tea and, in doing so, through a process described by Huang as ‘scholastic polishing’ (*wenhua ren de runse* 文化人的润色), represented it as a highly refined art. With obvious allusions to Lu Yu, Weng entitled his essay *Chaozhou Classic of Tea – Gongfu Tea (Chaozhou Chajing – Gongfu Cha)*²¹. He begins by drawing attention to what visitors to Chaoshan invariably note as the elegant quality of daily life, which is exemplified most strongly in gongfu tea. And gongfu tea, he continues, is ubiquitous:

No matter whether the occasion be a banquet, or in a quiet house, shop, or workshop, along the sides of streets, under a shed selling legumes and melons, at busy times or when relaxing, without exception there will be the

²¹ The full text of Weng Huidong’s essay is readily accessible today, appearing as an appendix in several works on Chaoshan gongfu tea, including Huang Ting (57).

earthenware stove and clay pot, teapot and cups raised, drinking for a long time or only briefly, to create this happy way of living²².

Weng's essay goes on to describe in detail the procedures for selecting tea, choosing water, preparing a fire, selecting utensils and making gongfu tea. For example, he states that Chaoshan gongfu tea should be drunk in small, shallow Ruo Shen (若深) cups, Ruo Shen being a Qing Dynasty ceramics maker from Jengdezhen. He also describes the attributes of a Chaoshan gongfu teapot – shallow, wide-bellied, ideally made from purple clay – and lists several styles of teapot. He repeats Lu Yu's distinction between water bubbling like fishes' eyes (the first stage of boiling, not suited for making tea) and bubbles like strings of pearls (the second, and most suitable stage of boiling). He also quotes from a poem by Su Dongpo, a Song Dynasty poet who wrote several verses celebrating tea drinking. He stresses the importance of drenching the teapot (*lin guan* 淋罐) on the outside as well as the inside, to ensure its capacity to impart the aroma of the tea, and of dunking the cups in scalding water (*tang bei* 烫杯) prior to pouring out the tea to be drunk.

Chen and Chen claim that Weng Huidong's account corroborated Yu Jiao's much earlier description of Chaoshan gongfu tea as 'a method of preparing tea, based on Lu Yu's *Cha Jing*, but using even more refined utensils', putting it beyond dispute (80, p. 49). In fact, however, although Weng Huidong alludes to Lu Yu and other classical writers on tea culture, he neither mentions Yu Jiao's description of Chaoshan gongfu tea, nor advances any corresponding claim about the origins of gongfu tea. The representation of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a 'living fossil', embodying the tea-making practices first enunciated by Lu Yu, may well have been inspired by Weng Huidong's seminal essay, but it is an assertion that has been added on to the latter, rather than drawn from it.

According to Huang, Weng Huidong's essay spawned other literary accounts, some of them published in Hong Kong and Singapore as well as in PRC. The monographs and academic papers cited earlier in this chapter – by Chen and Chen, Xu and Li, and Su and Chen – are also products of this discourse, and have in turn contributed to its continuing development (51, 54, 80). In some instances, contemporary writers, as well as referring to Weng Huidong's essay, have simply copied extended passages from it without acknowledgement, in effect claiming the words as their own.

²² 。。。。举措高起，无论嘉会盛宴，闲处寂居，商店工场，下至街边路侧，豆棚瓜下，每于百忙当中，抑或闲情逸致，无不惜此泥炉砂铫，举杯提壶，长饮短酌，以度此快乐人生。(Weng Huidong, reproduced in (81), p.109).

3.3 Discourse and the practice of Chaoshan gongfu tea

In concluding his discussion of Chaoshan gongfu tea, Huang points to an emerging divergence between literary representations and everyday practices. In recent decades, he argues, Chaoshan gongfu tea has undergone important changes, by way of simplifying some of the more complex components, both with regard to utensils used and methods of preparing tea. The scholars who codify and ‘polish’ Chaoshan gongfu tea, he continues, are powerless to regulate these changes in social practices²³. At the same time, he suggests, it is through these same scholarly activities of summarising and ‘polishing’ that Chaoshan gongfu tea has come to be seen as the representative – the exemplar – of modern Chinese gongfu tea. In similar vein, Wang Ling argues that, if we are to understand the meaning and significance of contemporary tea culture as embodied in places such as Chaoshan, we need to put aside the literary representations and observe the practices themselves. Xu and Li conclude their essay on Chaoshan gongfu tea by pointing in the same direction:

Nowadays, the old customs and modern culture mingle in tea markets, and tea-houses are springing up one after the other, creating environments that seek to synthesize tea art and folk customs, traditional with contemporary; integrating beautiful settings, the way of tea and local folk practices, thereby infusing the ancient history and inner meaning of tea culture with new elements²⁴.

In this study, I take up the challenge implied in these remarks. Having reviewed, in this chapter, the emergence of Chaoshan gongfu tea as the subject of a contemporary tea

²³ Huang Ting’s remarks in full: 几十年来, 潮汕工夫茶俗已经有了很大的变化, 从器具到烹治程式都删繁就简, 不再是旧日状貌。文人的总结和润色, 并不能对这种生活习俗有规范和提高的作用。但是, 这些总结和润色, 却使得潮汕的茶俗遐迩闻名, 以至一提起工夫茶, 总要举潮汕茶俗为例, 对孟臣罐、若深瓿, 对“关公巡城”、“韩信点兵”津津乐道。

先是经商业的推动, 后又加文人的润色, “潮汕工夫茶”终于成为流行于闽南粤东一带的、用小壶小杯冲沏乌龙茶的品茶习俗的代表 (81, p. 110)

²⁴ 如今, 古朴风俗与现代文明相结合的茶市、茶馆相继兴起, 它们在环境配套方面, 力求茶艺与民俗、传统与现代的高度统一, 使得环境美、茶道美与民俗美相结合, 使有着悠长历史和内涵的茶文化被注入新的元素而得到升华 (51, p. 58).

culture discourse, I now turn to exploring the everyday practices that give continuing meaning to Chaoshan gongfu tea in people's lives.

4. CHAOSHAN GONGFU TEA: INHERITED TRADITION AND ADOPTED PRACTICE

In setting out to explore contemporary Chaoshan gongfu tea-drinking practices and the significance of those practices for the people concerned, I deliberately sought out two types of respondents: firstly, people who had been born in Chaoshan and who had as a result grown up in a world in which gongfu tea was a recognized tradition; secondly, people from outside Chaoshan who had, for whatever reasons, taken up gongfu tea modeled on Chaoshan tradition and incorporated it into their own lives. As explained in Chapter 2, the study sample was made up of 32 individuals plus one family that I interviewed as a family (and have treated analytically as a single unit rather than as a collection of individuals). Of these, 22 individuals had been born and grown up in Chaoshan, while another four individuals, as well as the family, had been born outside Chaoshan, but taken up drinking gongfu tea as a regular practice. This chapter is based on interviews with these 26 individuals and one family, as well as on field observations. I explore these two pathways to becoming an exponent of Chaoshan gongfu tea, which I have labeled ‘inherited tradition’ and ‘acquired practice’ respectively, with a view to examining what each pathway reveals about the place of Chaoshan gongfu tea in these tea drinkers’ lives.

4.1 ‘Cong dongshi kaishi’ (从懂事开始): Chaoshan gongfu tea as inherited

Among the 22 people in this study who were born and grew up in Chaoshan, gongfu tea was not a set of skills or practices that they had consciously acquired, but rather part of the social and cultural landscape into which they were born. As one 37 year old female respondent put it when I asked her where she had learned to drink gongfu tea, she didn’t *learn* about it at all; it was simply there, part of the world she came into: ‘*cong dongshi kaishi*’ (‘从懂事开始’). Several people, in response to my questioning about an activity that was so much part of their taken-for-granted reality, answered by talking about what drinking gongfu tea did *not* mean for them. For example, several people remarked that gongfu tea was not something for which they had to make time – even though preparing and enjoying gongfu tea would be regarded by most external observers as quite a time-consuming activity. It was seen, rather, as a *natural* activity. The woman just quoted, for example, also remarked of gongfu tea that it was a custom and tradition that was there from one’s birth; holding the tea-bowl was a natural act, rather than something contrived, and it was very enjoyable: ‘... *yu sheng ju lai de xiguan de chuantong. Na zhe cha wan*

*hen ziru, bu jue de mafan, hen xiangshou*²⁵.

To Mr Zhao²⁶, a senior public servant from Jieyang in his mid-fifties, a key difference between Chaoshan people's way of drinking gongfu tea and that of outsiders had to do with the latter's need to find time for gongfu tea: '*Wo geren de ganjue, women he gongfu cha shi you kong de shihou jiu xiang he, danshi waimian de ren shi yao zhao ge shijian lai he, jiushi bujingyi he keyi de wenti*'²⁷.

I myself feel that whenever we have some spare time we will want to drink gongfu tea, whereas other people will create an occasion to drink; (for us it's just) without planning or deliberation.

The sense that gongfu tea was natural rather than some sort of contrived cultural act also found expression in references to it as a necessity, without which one could not feel comfortable (*bu shufu* '不舒服'). A busy female manager of a travel business, herself a non-smoker, said gongfu tea for her was like smokers' need for cigarettes or tobacco. Mr Zhao from Jieyang used a particularly evocative image when he described drinking gongfu tea as something that had 'seeped into our bones':

*Zhe shi yi zhong fengsu xiguan. Chaoshan de shenghuo jiezou bi qita difang yao man. Suoyi zhe zhong shenghuo xiguan jiu yizhi baoliu xialai. Zai meitian mang wan zhihou jiu hui zuo xialai he cha. Zhe yijing shentou dao guzi limian le. Ziran'er ran, tuoli bu liao le*²⁸.

This is a custom. The tempo of life in Chaoshan is slower than in other places, so the custom is retained. Each day when work has finished people will sit and drink tea. This has seeped into our bones. Naturally, we cannot abandon it.

Similarly, for many of the Chaoshan people I interviewed, preparing and drinking gongfu tea were not regarded as a form of *art*. Some of my respondents – as we shall see below – both among Chaoshan residents and others, have indeed cultivated Chaoshan gongfu

²⁵ '...与生俱来的习惯的传统.拿着茶碗很自如,不觉得麻烦,很享受'.

²⁶ Like other names of participants used in this study, this name is fictitious.

²⁷ 我个人的感觉,我们喝工夫茶是有空的时候就想喝,但是外面的人是要找个时间来喝,就是不经意和刻意的问题。

²⁸ 这是一种风俗习惯。潮汕的生活节奏比其他地方要慢。

所以这种生活习惯就一直保留下来。在每天忙完之后就会坐下来喝茶.这已经渗透到骨子里面了.自然而然,脱离不了了。

tea drinking as a refined art, but according to my Chaoshan-born interviewees this is the exception rather than the rule among Chaoshan tea-drinkers. Gongfu tea, that is to say, is not seen as an *adornment* of everyday life so much as an *integral part* of it. Two phrases in particular recurred in descriptions: the first was *xiguan* (习惯), the second, *shenghuo de yi bu fen* (生活的一部分).

The term *xiguan* is difficult to pin down with a single English word or phrase, since it functions both as a noun to mean ‘habit’ or ‘custom’ and as a verb, to mean ‘become used to’. In either usage, it connotes an activity or a set of circumstances that has become habitual, that is to say, it has become embedded in the taken-for-granted routines and relationships of everyday life. Among my respondents, the term was sometimes combined with others. In the passage quoted above, for example, Mr Zhao describes Chaoshan gongfu tea as ‘*yi zhong fengsu xiguan*’ ‘一种生风俗习惯’, which connotes folkways and customs as well as everyday habits, while others spoke of it as ‘*yi zhong shenghuo xiguan*’ ‘一种生活习惯’ - which again, evokes customary practices as well as the humbler notion of ‘habit’. But many people simply invoked the notion of *xiguan* to describe the place of gongfu tea in their lives.

The phrase *shenghuo de yi bu fen* is more readily translated into English; it means ‘part of our lives’. Again and again, in response to my questions about the place of gongfu tea in the lives of Chaoshan-born respondents, people invoked this description. It evokes, I think, at least two attributes: something, firstly, that is integrated into daily life, and secondly, something that is valued. The integration of gongfu tea into everyday Chaoshan life can in turn be seen in three dimensions: spatial, temporal and social.

4.1.1 Spatial integration

The most obvious of these aspects, at least to an outsider such as myself, is the spatial integration of gongfu tea into daily life. Put simply, in Chaoshan, gongfu tea sets are everywhere: in offices, factories, homes, hotel rooms. Figure 4.1 shows three very different workplace settings. The picture on the left depicts a rainy autumn night in a Shantou side street, where a man with a street stall selling octopus balls hovers over an earthenware charcoal-burning stove beneath a street lamp, heating water to make gongfu tea while his friend is busy texting on his mobile phone. The photograph in the centre shows a gongfu tea-set in a factory in Chaozhou, while the photograph on the right, shows the stylishly contemporary Apple store a few blocks away from the vendor’s street stall. Here, a *chapan* (茶盘) or tea tray, carved from a block of timber, with gongfu tea cups and a *gaiwan* (盖碗 - lidded cup) occupies pride of place in an area for receiving

customers.



Figure 4-1: Gongfu tea in the workplace: left, octopus ball vendor; centre, factory; right, Apple store.

In Chaoshan, drinking gongfu tea is primarily a part of household and workplace life rather than an activity set aside and associated with tea-houses. Most Chaoshan households, I was told - and in some cases saw - have a tea table or *chaji* (茶几) somewhere in the living room, to which family members will adjourn after a meal, in particular the evening meal. Traditionally, I was told, the tea is prepared by a man, although this is less rigidly followed today. While drinking tea, family members may chat or watch TV. The space constituted by the *chaji* is one marked out especially for drinking tea (and, in many instance, the closely associated leisure pastime of smoking cigarettes), but the boundaries between this space and other parts of the room need not be strong or impermeable, as the example shown in Figure 4.2 demonstrates.



Figure 4-2: Gongfu tea in a domestic setting

Here, the *chapan* sits on a dedicated tea table, which in turn is located in the living room, surrounded by armchairs. On the *chapan* are placed traditional accoutrements of gongfu tea - the small cups, a teapot, strainer, jug, and an ornamental clay bull. But so too is the teenage son's unwashed coffee cup. The table itself evokes similarly weak boundaries:

adjacent to the *chapan* stand a box of tissues, some boxes containing snacks, and the TV monitor. My own digital recorder, camcorder and some batteries complete the picture of slight disarray. Beneath the table-top is a lower shelf on which are stored containers of tea (barely visible), as well as a bucket for slops from the *chapan*, to which it is connected by plastic tubing. In short, the space for preparing and drinking gongfu tea, while clearly defined, is embedded in a context of everyday domesticity.

4.1.2 Temporal integration

All of the people whom I interviewed drank gongfu tea regularly at home, and more or less regularly at work, although in the latter setting there was considerably more variation in drinking patterns, in part because of the pressures of time and other activities, and in part because of constraints imposed by authorities. Most notably, a few years before my fieldwork, I was told by several people, an edict had gone out from the Guangdong provincial government expressly forbidding all but the most senior civil servants in Chaoshan from keeping gongfu teasetts in their offices, on the grounds that drinking gongfu tea was regarded by the government as too leisurely an activity for a productive workplace. In general, in my observation, gongfu tea was enjoyed in workplaces whenever the immediate pressures of the job allowed. At home, the most frequently mentioned time for drinking gongfu tea was after dinner and, sometimes, after lunch. (In Chaoshan, gongfu tea is normally drunk after rather than during meals.) The regularity with which gongfu tea is drunk in both of these settings testifies to the extent to which gongfu tea is woven into the daily routines of Chaoshan life.

Moreover, as the photographs in Figure 4.1 above make clear, and as several of my respondents made a point of stating, enjoying gongfu tea in Chaoshan is not the preserve of a leisured or wealthy class. Those less well-off, I was told, would normally buy cheaper teas, while the wealthy might think little of paying up to RMB 10,000 for one *jīn* (i.e. about half a kilogram) of a premium quality tea, but both would prepare, serve and drink the tea using the same processes.

4.1.3 Social integration

The integration of gongfu tea into both the spatial and temporal dimensions of everyday life in Chaoshan is linked to a third dimension: gongfu tea as a practice is sustained by and in turn nourishes sociability and friendship, and through these processes, helps to affirm people's sense of belonging to a distinctive regional society. In Chaoshan, remarked one of my informants, 'tea is like a bridge connecting people with people; people use tea as an instrument for maintaining their connections with family and friends'.

Zai Chaoshan, gongfu cha jiu xiang lianxi renmen guanxi de qiaoliang, dajia yong cha zuowei pengyou huozhe jiating chengyuan zhi jian goutong de gongju²⁹.

When I asked my informants why they thought that gongfu tea continued to occupy such a prominent place in Chaoshan social life, most responded by alluding to the place of informal socializing in everyday life, and the emphasis placed by Chaoshan people on cultural values that support these patterns. Several informants claimed that, compared with people in other parts of China, Chaoshan people were very *haoke* (好客), or hospitable, and placed a high value on *chuanmen* (串门), a term roughly equivalent to the phrase ‘dropping in’, with a connotation of crossing the hearth of the person being visited. In similar vein, others claimed that Chaoshan people cared more about personal relationships than other Chinese. In the words of one informant, Chaoshan people were more *renqing* (人情) – that is, more attuned to human feelings and the etiquette through which such concerns are conveyed. Another described Chaoshan people as ‘*hen reqing, hen tuanjie*’ (‘很热情很团结’) – that is, very warm-hearted and community-spirited.

Any attempt to test these collective self-assessments objectively would be beyond the scope of this study and, in any case, not relevant to it. What matters here is the apparent pervasiveness of these beliefs among Chaoshan people about their own cultural values. Chaoshan people like to think that they value relationships and the kinds of sociability through which relationships are nourished, and gongfu tea is a vehicle *par excellence* for giving expression to and nourishing relationships.

Sociability is built into the very structure of gongfu tea, firstly and most obviously through the convention that gongfu teasetts normally contain three small cups (together with a pot or *gaiwan*). Some sets contain more than three cups, and there is no rule that limits the number of participants in a tea-drinking session. Three, however, is a favoured number, captured in a local saying that several of my informants repeated: *cha san jiu si* (茶三酒四) – literally: tea three, wine four. The notion here is that drinking gongfu tea is most appropriate as the setting for the quiet, relaxed sociability generated by a small number of people. Wine, by contrast, lends itself to a more gregarious – and perhaps noisy – setting.

Secondly, the practices entailed in preparing, serving and drinking gongfu tea combine to

²⁹ ‘在潮汕，工夫茶就像联系人们关系的桥梁，大家用茶作为朋友或者家庭成员之间沟通的工具。’

foster an ambience of quiet, relaxed attentiveness both to the tea itself and to each other. I was able to enjoy partaking of this ambience on many occasions, sometimes by being invited by informants to join them in drinking gongfu tea, and quite often as a result of chance encounters with people in the street or in shops who were preparing gongfu tea, and whose response when I or my partner and I stopped and showed interest was to display *haoke* by pulling out one or more stools and inviting us to join them. No matter how busy or noisy the surrounding setting, the presence of a gongfu teaset, the quiet deliberativeness through which the host or *cha zhe* (茶者) went about boiling the water, preparing the pot or *gaiwan*, brewing and serving the tea to his or her guests, followed by the opportunity for the guests to savour the tea, then continue chatting – these activities created their own, much slower tempo, their own space to attend to aromas, tastes, and conversation.

This does not mean that gongfu tea cannot or should not be enjoyed when on one's own, but the experience of solitary drinking is sometimes portrayed as different. As one informant put it:

Drinking in a group is for cheer,
Drinking in a pair is for refinement,
Drinking alone is for revitalization.

Zhong yin, qu le (众饮, 取乐)
Dui yin, qu qu (对饮, 取趣)
Du yin, qu shen. (独饮, 取神.)

Drinking gongfu tea fosters and nourishes friendship. The adage *yi cha hui you* (以茶会友) – through tea foster friends - does not, so far as I am aware, originate in Chaoshan and is certainly not restricted to Chaoshan, but it has currency here in that several informants mentioned it in talking about the place of gongfu tea in their lives. Tea, moreover, is associated with particular qualities in friendship. Again, to quote an adage that is not peculiar to Chaoshan, a distinction is made between friendships associated with tea and *jiu rou pengyou* (酒肉朋友): wine and meat friends. Whereas friendships associated with tea are valued for the intrinsic qualities of the relationship, 'wine and meat friends' are viewed as more opportunistic. One of my informants evoked a similar distinction when he remarked that good friends – '*zhenzhen hao de pengyou*' (真真的朋友) – he would invite home to drink tea, whereas with ordinary friends – '*putong de pengyou*' (普通的朋友) – he would go to a restaurant for meat and wine.

To sum up, among Chaoshan people gongfu tea is an inherited rather than acquired practice. Although – as I show in a later chapter – some gongfu tea drinkers choose to cultivate the practice as a form of tea art, among most Chaoshan people drinking gongfu tea is not regarded as an art – that is, as an ornament enriching daily life – but rather as a daily necessity. It is habitual – *xiguan* – a part of people’s everyday lives – *shenghuo de yi bu fen*, integrated into the spatial, temporal and social dimensions of everyday life. For all the similarities that may be displayed in the ways of preparing and drinking tea, this constitutes a very different kind of experience from that of individuals from outside Chaoshan, who have incorporated gongfu tea modeled on Chaoshan practice into their lives by choice.

4.2 Gongfu tea as adopted practice

The four individuals and one family in the sample who were not born in Chaoshan revealed something of the different pathways by which gongfu tea closely modeled on Chaoshan practices can be acquired.

Lin Jinquan³⁰ is a quietly spoken man in his early fifties who was born and continues to live in Guangzhou, where he holds a middle-management position in a government-owned tollway management company. About 15 years ago he took up gongfu tea as a hobby (*aihao* 爱好), influenced, he explained, by friends and colleagues who had already become gongfu tea drinkers. Today, he enjoys drinking gongfu tea at home every evening after dinner, and also at work with his colleagues, when office demands permit. Although his wife sometimes joins him in drinking tea, gongfu tea is very much his domain rather than something shared.

For Mr Lin, preparing and drinking gongfu tea creates a space for quiet, contemplative relaxation. As he put it: *‘he cha keyi fangsong* (喝茶可以放松) ‘drinking tea enables me to relax’. He described how he liked to sit for several hours after dinner, drinking tea and gazing at the fish in the large tank on the other side of the living room. What sort of feelings, I asked, did this generate? He thought for a while – remarking that it was hard to answer in words, that the question was ‘deep’ – then said that his life was made up of two elements: movement and calmness: *‘wo de shenghuo you dong you jing*’ (我的生活有动有静). The movement was represented by cycling. He liked to spend weekends cycling with a few friends in the countryside, away from the pollution. (In another room stood an elegant Italian-made touring bike.) Drinking tea, watching the fish, expressed

³⁰ A pseudonym.

the other pole: calmness.

Chen Ye³¹ is another Guangzhou-born man who a few years ago – he is now in his early 30s – took up Chaoshan-style gongfu tea as a personal hobby. He now regards it as his second most important interest after listening to classical music. Like Mr Lin, he drinks mostly in the evening, in the 9th floor apartment he shares with his wife, 16-month old daughter and his retired parents. Most of his friends, he said, do not share his love of tea. Although when he drinks tea during the day he prefers green tea, in the evening he enjoys *pu er*, *tie guanyin* or the more heavily oxidized *yan cha* from Fujian. He described himself as ‘very traditionalist’ and as a Buddhist. In one corner of the living room stands a three-tiered shrine made of dark, polished timber containing pictures of ancestors and, at the top, a statue of Guanyin. Every day he lights incense and places it in all three levels, and he commences his tea drinking sessions in the evening by offering a bowl of tea to the ancestors and to Guanyin.

I asked him why he had adopted such strongly traditional values. Largely, he explained, because of the influence of his father, from whom he had learnt how to prepare gongfu tea. He had also read books on tea culture. And what was it about gongfu tea that had attracted him? He said he valued tea drinking as a way of calming down, a quality that had first proved its benefits to him when, in a previous position in sales and marketing with another large company, he had been always ‘on the go’. The act of preparing tea in itself made him feel calm – and continues to do so. Perhaps for Chinese people, he added, tea is valued as much for its mental effects as for its taste. Tea, he said, can be seen as a way of living. He has also become a collector of teapots, of which he has quite a collection, several with certificates of authentication signed by the potter

Both of these men, though of different ages, exhibit similar pathways so far as gongfu tea is concerned. Both have been drawn to it because it inculcates a contemplative form of relaxation that counterbalances aspects of their lives that demand more physical and mental energy (and, perhaps, stress). Both have taken it up as a personal practice, indulged largely by themselves in the privacy of their homes. Neither has sought out tea-houses. Although both value the attentiveness entailed in preparing and appreciating gongfu tea, neither has attempted to emulate the meticulous sequences of gestures and actions set out in literary accounts of Chaoshan gongfu tea (and discussed in the previous chapter). Mr Lin’s teacups are a motley collection of mostly non-matching cups, while the cups used by Chen Ye, though considerably smaller than, say, the 250 ml teacups regarded as standard by Western tea drinkers, were nonetheless larger than the classic small cups used

³¹ A pseudonym.

in Chaoshan. Both made a habit of sourcing good quality tea from trusted suppliers, and Chen Ye has elevated teapots to the status of collectible *objets d'art*. Yet for both, drinking tea appeared to be primarily a form of relaxation rather than an 'art'.

Chen Yujun³² came to gongfu tea by a different route. A senior public servant of around 50, now living in Guangzhou, Mr Chen was born into a Hakka family in the city of Meizhou, also in eastern Guangdong province but outside Chaoshan. He remembers as a child drinking green tea out of big glasses. Later, he married a Chaoshan-born woman, and was introduced to her region's style of tea-drinking. Today, he says, he has become an even keener gongfu tea enthusiast than his wife. Every evening after coming home from work, the first thing he does is to prepare some gongfu tea; his wife, who is less inclined to prepare it, usually joins him in drinking. Tea for him offers three principal benefits: flavours to appreciate; a more civilized vehicle for socializing than liquor, and an aid to digestion.

According to Chen Yujun's observations, more and more people these days are taking up Chaoshan-style gongfu tea, not despite the pressures and tempo generated by modern urban living, but *because of* them. In his view, these pressures have heightened at least some people's appreciation of the need to slow down and be a little more *jiangjiu*, while the improved living standards following on from the economic reforms have given more people the material resources with which to enjoy preparing and drinking good quality tea.

Economic development and its enhancement of living standards have played an even more striking part in the Fang family's adoption of gongfu tea³³. They too were Hakka farmers in what, just a few decades ago, was a poor village that today lies in the heart of the booming metropolis of Shenzhen, near the border with Hong Kong. Unlike many farmers in other parts of China who have reportedly been forced to surrender their landholdings to urban developers for inadequate recompense, the Fang family benefited handsomely from selling substantial holdings to the government for urban development, at the same time retaining some land for their own use. The result, today, is that several members of the family have been able to retire in their 50s, and the family as a whole has retained, among other properties, a rural enclave in Shenzhen where, surrounded by apartment blocks and office blocks, they tend an orchard of lychees and longan trees, a vegetable garden, and let their chickens wander.

³² A pseudonym.

³³ Also a pseudonym.

With the increased leisure time opened up by their changed circumstances, they also enjoy gongfu tea. Like Chen Yujun, the Fang family inherited a tradition of drinking green tea. The tea would be brewed in large pots, poured into bottles and taken out into the fields to drink during the day. Until very recently the family had grown its own green tea on the present property – not particularly fine tea, one of them added, but nonetheless it was drinkable. Unfortunately, year ago a builder who had been called in for some renovations failed to recognize the trees and ploughed them up.

By this time, family members had also begun to change their tea-drinking practices, modeling them on the more leisurely and refined practices of tea-drinkers in the neighbouring region of Chaoshan. What was it, I asked, that made Chaoshan-style gongfu tea so attractive under these circumstances? The answer: it creates an environment where people can sit down and chat. As one young member of the family put it: *'Keyi zuo xia he pengyou liaotian.'*

This certainly was the function I observed. The tea-drinking space was a dining room table under a breezeway, surrounded by chairs. On the table stood a simple wooden *chapan*, from which a hose led to a bucket underneath the table, for removing slops. There was nothing especially refined about either the space or the utensils; it was clearly a place for passing the time relaxing with friends and family. On the evening of my visit in late 2012, three generations of the family were present, including a sprightly 86-year old grandma who remained forever busy, sweeping the floor, spreading and drying rice for the chickens, and a grandson, Xiao Fang, who on this occasion at least presided over preparing and serving tea. In contrast to Chaoshan gongfu tea practice, but in keeping with Hakka tea-drinking traditions, he served green tea, using a standard purple clay gongfu teapot, from which he first poured the tea into a glass jug. From here the tea was distributed into small gongfu style teacups, which were passed around among the guests.

Although evenings following dinner were favourite occasions for drinking gongfu tea, the practice was not confined to meal-times. At other times, snacks would often be served: fresh fruit, biscuits, nuts. I wondered about the relative importance of tea and liquor as accompaniments to sociability under these circumstances. Wine and other liquor, I was told, also had their place in many people's lives, but tended to be associated with going to bars and karaoke places with friends, while tea remained the main beverage for socializing around the table at home.

So what lay behind the adoption of Chaoshan-style gongfu tea among the Fang family, an adoption that, in contrast to the very personal acts of choice shown by Li Jinqun,

Chen Ye and Chen Yujun above, seems to have come about as a collective response to changed circumstances? The most obvious factor was an increase in leisure time, and enough economic wellbeing to be able to make use of the expanded leisure time. In this sense, the adoption expresses one of the meanings of ‘gongfu’: an activity that requires time to perform. Drinking tea became more than a way of quenching one’s thirst while working in the fields; it became a vehicle for enjoying leisure time with family and friends. For the Fang family, that clearly remains its primary role. They have not attempted to elevate gongfu tea into an art. Although they conform to the practices of preparing and drinking tea according to Chaoshan convention, they do not seek out particularly fine pots, and use ordinary tap water. According to family members, however, some Hakka converts to Chaoshan gongfu tea have gone a step further and begun to cultivate it as an art.

One of these is Mr Lu³⁴, to whom we were introduced. Like the Fang family, he has benefited financially from the rapid economic development of Shenzhen. At one time he ran his own construction company, and he and his brother have owned several restaurants. Today, at age 60, he has effectively retired, although he says that he still retains links to his enterprises. Around 20 years ago, he explains, he started to develop an appreciation for tea and its preparation. Today, an alcove to one side of his large living room is occupied by a magnificent tea table, carved from a single piece of camphor. On one side of the table stands a chair, also elaborately carved from a single piece of timber. This is normally occupied by Mr Lu as the host. On the other side are several chairs and stools, also carved from timber, some from the same tree as the table, some from a lychee tree.

Together, these furnishings, as well as the *chapan* on the table and numerous cups and teapots, define this as a space dedicated to preparing and drinking tea. On the occasion of our visit to his home, he began by making a pot of *Dahongpao* tea, from Fujian, remarking as he did so that this was the variety of tea that he drank most frequently. Like other Hakka tea-drinkers, he had begun by drinking green tea, and still believed that green tea was the most health-promoting of all the varieties, on the grounds that it underwent less processing than other kinds of tea. Later, after we had consumed a few *pao* of *Dahongpao*, he brewed some high quality green tea produced elsewhere in Guangdong province.

Well appointed though it was, this was only one of Mr Lu’s places dedicated to drinking tea. After drinking at his home he drove us to a small rural enclave, still in Shenzhen, where he has a house, a pond seemingly full of fish ready to be caught (as one was for our lunch, by means of Mr Lu’s expertly cast net), a small piggery, chicken and duck pens, and a vegetable and herb garden. Under two trees near the fishpond, Mr Lu has

³⁴ A pseudonym.

created two places for drinking tea: one consists of some natural stones and stools made from tree trunks around a concrete table; the other of some concrete benches surrounding a ‘table’ consisting of a large slab of natural rock (see Figure 4.3). Here, he explained, he liked to pass the time of day drinking tea with friends, either those whom he had invited here for the purpose, or others who dropped by, knowing that he would enjoy a cup and a chat.

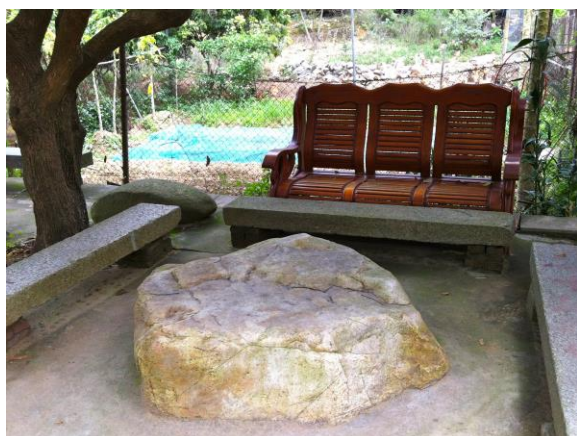


Figure 4-3: One of two spaces for drinking tea in Mr Lu's garden

Although in the limited time of our visit I could not be too categorical, I sensed that for Mr Lu, as for the Fang family, preparing and drinking tea was primarily a means of spending leisurely time with friends. He neither smokes nor drinks alcohol, and tea, he remarked, has become his main interest. He says that he has not consciously adopted Chaoshan gongfu tea as his model, yet the style of tea preparation and the utensils used mark his practice as strongly influenced by Chaoshan gongfu tea. Mr Lu has also devoted more attention than the Fang family to aesthetic aspects of drinking tea – the most visible sign being the tea table and chairs – and, in contrast to the Fang family, he has designated several spaces as places to be set aside for enjoying tea. To this extent, he has cultivated tea drinking as an ‘art’ rather than simply as part of everyday life. But the cultivation is partial, and far from an all-consuming passion. For example, pointing to a purple clay teapot, he explained that the person from whom he purchased it had assured him that it was made in Yixing, the home of the finest teapots, but he didn’t really know if this was true and, he implied, he was not unduly concerned whether it was or not. He was also a little less *jiangjiu* than most Chaoshan tea-drinkers I observed in that, unlike them, he used the same teapot to brew both a *Dahongpao* tea and green tea. However, in the attention he devoted to seeking out good quality teas, selecting particular teas for particular occasions, and in the attention he devoted to preparing and brewing tea in accordance with ‘good practice’, as well as in the attention bestowed upon the settings in which he shared tea with friends, Mr Lu has elevated an acquired variant of Chaoshan

gongfu tea into an elegant practice, to be enjoyed with friends.

These examples – four individuals and a family – each illustrate ways in which people who are not born into a cultural milieu where gongfu tea is already present have incorporated the practices associated with this way of enjoying tea into their daily lives. In each case, adoption of gongfu tea has come about as a result of a conscious choice, although the pathways leading to making the choice differ from one another. The examples described should not be read as some sort of typology of adopters. Perhaps a larger study would yield such a typology. For the present, I suggest, it is enough to show some of the ways in which Chaoshan-style gongfu tea can be acquired, and to highlight some of the similarities and differences between this kind of adoption of the practice and what I have called ‘inheriting’ gongfu tea by growing up in Chaoshan.

4.3 Conclusion

For ‘inheritors’ and ‘adopters’ alike, Chaoshan gongfu tea provides a vehicle for cultivating and enjoying friendships and sociability. It creates opportunities for appreciating the tastes, aromas and colours of different teas, and for cultivating discernment. It fosters relaxation, and is perceived to have health benefits – most commonly, in aiding digestion. Among those who have adopted gongfu tea, it achieves these purposes as a result of a personal lifestyle choice, by people shaping their lives out of materials (including discretionary time) available to them. At this point, however, I sense a need for caution. ‘Lifestyle’ today is about symbolic meanings in landscapes devoted to consumption of commodities. Of course, the adoption of Chaoshan gongfu tea is a form of modern consumption by those who have the necessary resources, and a visit to Chaoshan itself or, for that matter, a trawl of the web will reveal numerous examples of attempts to commodify gongfu tea. At the same time, the adoption practices I have outlined above cannot be equated with, say, the consumption of status-laden *brands*, and in general the degree of commodification in the contexts I observed – whether of teas, utensils or styles of drinking – is only weakly developed. Perhaps in future it will become more prominent.

There remains one difference between adopters and inheritors: for the latter, but not the former, Chaoshan gongfu tea is integrated into the very fabric of everyday life, affirming gongfu tea drinkers’ identity as participants in a distinctive regional society and culture. It has ‘seeped into our bones’. With this exploration of the two kinds of foundation for the contemporary practice of Chaoshan gongfu tea in mind, let us turn now to the practices themselves.

5. CHAOSHAN GONGFU TEA AS EVERYDAY PRACTICE

For all the variations in tea-making traditions at different times and places, the process at base comprises three phases: first, the preliminary steps – selecting utensils, heating water and selecting tea; second, brewing the tea, and thirdly, serving and drinking the tea. What distinguishes Chaoshan gongfu, as we have seen, is the use of small teapots or *gaiwan* – with capacity usually between 80 ml and 200 ml, in which a strong brew of tea is prepared, often with the dry tea-leaves occupying between 1/3 and 2/3 of the space in the pot or, for some types of tea, even more. Infusing time is brief – usually one minute or less – before the tea is poured into small cups – usually just 25-30 ml capacity. Participants typically use the same pot of leaves to prepare several brews – sometimes up to 10 brews, but rarely less than five or six, with participants expected to attend to subtle changes in flavor and aroma with each successive brew from the same leaves.

But this is a very mechanistic description. It conveys no more of the qualities of a gongfu tea-drinking event than, say, a real-estate advertisement listing the number of bedrooms and bathrooms in a house tells us about what it would be like to live in that house. What makes an episode of gongfu tea-drinking in Chaoshan distinctive is, from my observation, a combination of the *tempo* and *tone* of the event. Time flows more slowly, quietly, as the rhythms of heating the water, brewing the tea, serving and drinking the tea interweave with those of conversations between friends or associates, for anything from ten minutes to a few hours.

How are these events constructed? To explore this question, it is necessary to look more closely at the individual components, which are of two kinds: observable actions and gestures, and the accompanying mental states that are not visible to observation, but may become so as a result of inquiry. In terms often invoked in writings about Chinese tea culture, these are the dimensions of outer form and inner spirit – *wai* (外) and *nei* (内) (85, Appendix 4). Wang and others equate skillful performance of the outer actions and gestures to tea art – *chayi* (茶艺) – and the presence of the appropriate inner mental states, or spirit, to *chadao* (茶道) (11). Each is essential to give meaning to the other: ‘*you dao er wu yi, na shi kongdong de lilun; you yi er wu dao, yi ze wu jing, wu shen*’ (11, p.58)³⁵. ‘Spirit without art is empty theory; art without spirit creates rules without essence, without

³⁵ ‘有道而无艺，那是空洞的理论；有艺而无道，艺则无精，无神’.

spiritual meaning'. Since, in this study, I seek to understand something of the *meaning* that practising gongfu tea holds for participants, and the part that gongfu tea plays in their lives, it is necessary to attend to the inner as well as the outer dimensions.

Unfortunately, the moment we pick apart the component elements of the tea-drinking event, we lose sight not only of the interconnection between outer and inner dimensions, but also of the rhythms that give meaning to the event as an experience. That is a price to pay for the deeper understanding of the event that a good analysis should bring. With this cautionary note in mind, in this chapter I attempt to describe and analyse gongfu tea as an ensemble of practices in contemporary everyday life in Chaoshan. The descriptions are drawn from observations and conversations with tea-drinkers, some of which I also recorded by either audio or video media. The emphasis throughout this chapter is on gongfu tea as an everyday practice. In the following chapter I explore the distinctions that come into play when Chaoshan gongfu tea is practised as an *art*, rather than as part of everyday life. The chapter begins by describing the observable actions entailed in preparing and serving gongfu tea, then turns to exploring the associated mental states.

5.1 Preliminary steps

A session of drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea begins with six preliminary or preparatory steps, the sequencing of which may vary from that shown below:

- selecting water;
- heating the water;
- selecting tea;
- selecting utensils;
- warming the teapot (or *gaiwan*), and
- rinsing the cups.

Each step involves choosing from among several options. Table 5.1 lists the options observed in use among research participants for each of the six steps. These options are examined further below.

Table 5-1: Preparatory steps in preparing gongfu tea

Action	Observed options
Selecting water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using tap water • Using bottled water • Filtering tap water • Fetching & storing water from the mountains
Heating the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heating water in a kettle made of unglazed clay, placed on an earthenware stove, fuelled by charcoal. • Heating water in an electric kettle, or on a stove.
Selecting tea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of several varieties of locally grown <i>Fenghuang Dancong</i> (凤凰单丛) tea; • One of many varieties of <i>Wuyi Yan Cha</i> (武夷岩茶) from northern Fujian Province, <i>Tieguanyin</i> (铁观音) from Anxi region of Fujian Province; black teas, or <i>Pu'er</i> tea (from Yunnan Province).
Selecting utensils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teapot (usually purple clay teapots from Yixing or red clay teapots from Fengxi), or <i>gaiwan</i>; • Variety of teacups; • <i>Cha chuan</i> (tea boat), <i>chapan</i> (tea plate) and/or <i>chaji</i> (tea table) or <i>chatai</i> (more elaborate tea table).
Warming the pot or <i>gaiwan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boiling water poured directly from <i>chadiao</i> or kettle into the teapot/<i>gaiwan</i>.
Rinsing the teacups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storing teacups in a separate pot filled with hot water, and taking them out when ready to use them. • Pouring boiling water into teacups from <i>chadiao</i> or kettle, rinsing cups and emptying water onto <i>chapan</i> or <i>cha chuan</i>. • Pouring boiling water from teapot/<i>gaiwan</i> (same water as used in preceding step) into teacups, then rinsing each cup by rolling it in the water contained in another cup, using one's fingers. • Same process as above, but using tongs (<i>jiazi</i>) instead of fingers to handle the cups.

5.1.1 Selecting water

Any discerning tea-drinker, whether in China or anywhere else, will pay at least some attention to the quality of water used to infuse the leaves, since it cannot help but influence the flavor. In China, the importance of choosing one's water source wisely is emphasized in the original tea classic – Lu Yu's *Cha Jing* – where the reader is advised that the most suitable water for preparing tea is to be found in mountain streams; next in suitability is river water, while water drawn from a well is inferior (5). Thirteen hundred years later, according to the Chaozhou writer Weng Huidong, Lu Yu's principles lived on in mid-20th century Chaoshan gongfu tea practice. After quoting from the *Cha Jing* on the respective merits of various water sources, Weng claimed that Chaozhou tea drinkers are so attentive to the essential qualities of different kinds of water that they think nothing of walking long distances into a particular mountain gully to fetch water for tea (86).

Today, however, most Chaoshan people, at least those living in towns and cities, do not have ready access to pure mountain springs. My observations suggest that most people, in preparing gongfu tea as an everyday practice, either make do with whatever is at hand – often water out of the tap – or employ one or both of two modern alternatives: purchasing bottled water, or drawing water from a domestic filtration unit, such as the one shown below in the office of one of my participants.



Figure 5-1: Urn for storing water, with built-in filtration system

Just one participant stated that he regularly travelled into the mountains to obtain water for tea-making. This was Mr Ye Hanzhong (叶汉钟), the proprietor of a tea wholesale business in Chaozhou and the author of two books on Chaoshan gongfu tea³⁶.

³⁶ Since Mr Ye Hanzhong is publicly identified with marketing and writing about gongfu tea, I have not concealed his identity with a pseudonym.

5.1.2 Heating the water

Traditionally, water for making gongfu tea was heated in a kettle made of unglazed clay (*shadiao* 砂铫), which in turn was placed on top of an earthenware stove (*hong nilu* 红泥炉). The process is codified in two of the early steps listed in the 18-step process for making traditional Chaoshan gongfu tea shown Chapter 3, namely: *nilu sheng huo* (泥炉生火) - light the earthenware stove – and *shadiao tao shui* (沙铫掏水) - put water into the clay kettle (80). These two are traditionally linked to a third step: placing olive-shaped charcoal pellets immediately under the *shadiao* - *lantanzhu shui* (榄炭煮水) - to impart, it is said, a distinctive smoky flavour to the water as it heats up. The stove, *shadiao* and charcoal pellets are shown in Figure 5.2.



Figure 5-2: Stove, kettle and charcoal pellets traditionally used for heating water

Figure 5.2 shows one more component of the traditional set-up for heating water for gongfu tea: a fan (*yushan* 羽扇) made from goose feathers attached to a bamboo handle, used to invigorate the flame in the earthenware stove.

Among the participants in this study, just three used the traditional earthenware stove and clay kettle for making gongfu tea. Two of them were gongfu tea enthusiasts who enjoy taking the time to attend to detail in making fine tea. The third was, at least in his apparent socio-economic circumstances, at the opposite end of the scale: this was the octopus ball vendor in Shantou whose earthenware stove and kettle are shown in the previous chapter in Figure 4.1. From my observations, for most day-to-day purposes, gongfu tea-drinkers in Chaoshan have abandoned the earthenware stove, kettle, pellets and goose-feather fan in favour of electric jugs or kettles, often combined with a small electric hot-plate to keep the water hot.

5.1.3 Selecting tea

The most widely favoured tea in Chaoshan, and the one most strongly associated with the local tea-drinking culture, is *Fenghuang Dancong* (凤凰单丛) tea, a variety of Oolong

tea grown in the Fenghuang mountains to the north of Chaozhou, mostly on small, family-owned farms. ‘Dancong’ literally means ‘single stem’, although according to one contemporary scholar of Chaozhou tea, in Chaozhou usage ‘cong’ (丛) is used more loosely as a numerical classifier to refer to plants, so that ‘*yi cong shu*’, for example, means ‘one tree’ (87, p. 50). Originally, according to Qiu, *Fenghuang Dancong* tea was produced with leaves harvested from a single tree – hence the name ‘dancong’ – and the trees in turn were propagated naturally. Today, trees are propagated vegetatively, and the leaves used for any given production run will normally be picked from several trees (87, p. 50).

According to local tradition, the origins of *Fenghuang Dancong* tea date back to the final years of the Southern Song Dynasty around 1278, when the last emperor, Zhao Bing, fleeing from the advancing Mongol armies, left the capital - Hangzhou – and found himself in the Fenghuang mountains. Here, parched with thirst, he made tea from the local leaves. He was said to have been particularly impressed with the tea from one of the local peaks – Wudong Shan (乌崇山) - not only for its thirst quenching properties, but also for the lingering charm of its taste (88, p. 154, 89, p. 48). Since that time, one of its epithets has been the ‘Song plant’ (*Song zhong* 宋种), and tea trees dating back to the Song Dynasty are still being cultivated (88, p. 154).

More than ten varieties of *Fenghuang Dancong* tea are recognized today, although the taxonomy of varieties is still not fully standardized. The names – for example, *Rougui Xiang* (肉桂香) or Fragrance of Cinammon; *Zhilan Xiang* (芝兰香) Fragrance of Orchid; *Xingren Xiang* (杏仁香), Fragrance of Almond– testify to the association of *Fenghuang Dancong* tea with natural, floral aromas and subtle, fruity flavours (88, pp. 154-5). Although these and other *Fenghuang Dancong* varieties are the most popular teas among Chaoshan gongfu tea drinkers, they were by no means the only varieties drunk by participants in this study. Also popular were several types of Oolong tea from Fujian Province, including the rich, dark *Wuyi Yancha* (武夷岩茶) and several varieties of the more lightly fermented *Tie Guanyin* (铁观音) from Anxi county. Another tea from Wuyi mountain area served by several participants was the fully-fermented (i.e., in Western terminology, black tea) known as *Jin Jun Mei* (金骏眉 – literally Golden Beautiful Eyebrows). This tea, the current popularity of which is said to have spawned a number of fakes on the market, produces an orange-red brew, sweet, fruity taste and a lingering sweet after-taste – and a price tag anywhere up to 10,000 RMB (about \$AUD1,500) for one *jin* or half a kilogram. A number of participants also served Pu-er tea (普洱茶) from Yunnan Province in southwestern China. Conspicuous by its absence from the range of teas I drank as part of the study, at least with Chaoshan tea-drinkers, was any kind of

green tea. As far as I'm aware, green tea is rarely consumed by tea-drinkers from Chaoshan.

Choice of teas is entirely a matter of personal preference, which in turn may be shaped not only by preferred taste but also by factors such as beliefs about which kinds of tea are regarded as particularly suited as digestive aids for certain kinds of foods, or which ones are more or less likely to keep the drinker awake at night.

5.1.4 Selecting utensils (*chaju* 茶具)

In his 1957 essay which, as pointed out in Chapter Three, laid the foundation for a literary discourse about Chaoshan gongfu tea, Weng Huidong attributed the defining qualities of gongfu tea not to the tea itself, but rather to the superior quality of the utensils and equipment used, and the leisurely and carefree mood in which the tea is prepared³⁷. Weng listed no fewer than 18 utensils:

1. *Chahu* (茶壺) or teapot, also referred to in Chaoshan as *chong guan* (冲罐);
2. *Gai ou* (盖瓯): a bowl, shaped – to use Weng's image – like an inverted bell (*'xing ru yang zhong'* 形如仰钟) with a fitted lid, originally used, according to Weng, by officials and merchants as an alternative to a teapot for brewing tea;
3. *Chabei* (茶杯): teacup, ideally in Weng's schema, small, paper thin, blue and white ceramic cups bearing on the underside of their base the four character inscription '*Ruo Shen Zhen Cang*' (若深珍藏), or 'Ruo Shen Collection'. According to Weng, the cups should be small enough to allow the contents to be comfortably imbibed in one sip, and shallow enough to ensure that no tea is left in the bottom of the cup;
4. *Chaxi* (茶洗): bowls for washing utensils. Weng stated that three *chaxi* bowls are required: one for rinsing teacups, one for rinsing teapots, and one for left over or discarded tea and water;
5. *Chapan* (茶盘): tea tray, with a level surface and room for four cups;
6. *Chadian* (茶垫): another bowl, similar in size to the *chapan*, for containing boiling water and also containing the teapot;
7. *Shui ping* (水瓶): water container (urn, vase);
8. *Shui bo* (水钵): water bowl – a ceramic bowl in which water for use in tea-making is stored, and traditionally extracted using a ladle made of coconut palm;
9. *Long gang* (龙缸): large jar for storing water;

³⁷ '*Gongfu cha zhi tebie zhi chu, bu zai yu cha benzhi, er zai yu chaju qimin zhi peibei jingliang, yiji xiangqing yizhi zhi peng zhi.*' '工夫茶之特别之处，不在于茶之本质，而在于茶具器皿之配备精良，以及闲情逸致之烹制' (86, p. 284).

10. *Hong ni huolu* (红泥火炉): small earthenware stove;
11. *Shadiao* (砂铫): also with a folk name *cha guo zi* (茶锅仔), a small clay pot with a handle and a spout, used for boiling water on the earthenware stove;
12. *Yushan* (羽扇): fan made from white goose feathers and a bamboo handle, used to fan the fire in the stove;
13. *Tong huo zhu* (铜火箸): copper tongs for adjusting fuel in the stove;
14. *Cha guan xi he* (茶罐锡盒) metal container(s) of various shapes and sizes for storing tea-leaves;
15. *Cha jin* (茶巾): tea towel, for drying utensils;
16. *Zhu zhu* (竹箸) bamboo chopsticks, used as tongs for picking out tea residue;
17. *Cha zhuo* (茶桌): tea table, used to display the tea utensils;
18. *Cha dan* (茶担): cabinet for transporting tea wares, using a shoulder pole (86).

As shown above, the stove, *shadiao* and fan have not entirely disappeared from everyday use, but many items on the list above belong, as Zeng and Ye point out, to a bygone era (90, pp. 54-5). Chen and Chen date many of the changes from the 1970s, when the earthenware stove, charcoal fuel and goose-feather fan began to be displaced, initially by kerosene stoves, and later by electric kettles, which by the 1990s had found their way into most households (80, p. 89). They also note two further changes that have taken place in recent decades. The first is the increasing use of the *gaiwan* (盖碗) or lidded cup for making tea (Chen and Chen retain the term *gai'ou* (盖瓯) – literally ‘lidded bowl’). The second is the rise in popularity of what is popularly called today the *chachuan* (茶船) or ‘tea boat’³⁸, a piece of equipment that is said to have originated in the ceramics centre of Fengxi, close to Chaozhou, in the 1960s (90, p. 61), and that combines the functions of what were formerly two separate pieces of equipment: the *chapan* (teatray) and the *chaxi*. The *chachuan* comprises two components: a bowl, and a removable perforated disc that fits snugly within the rim of the bowl to form a flat, upper-level surface. The diameter of the bowl and disc must be large enough to accommodate a teapot or *gaiwan* and a minimum of three cups. Most of the processes of making the tea – rinsing the pot, rinsing the cups, rinsing the tea-leaves, and finally pouring tea into the cups – are performed on the *chachuan*. Excess water or tea is simply poured onto the lid and drains away into the bowl below, which can be emptied at the host’s convenience.

The *chachuan* or *chapan* – whichever is used – forms the basis for a gongfu tea-drinking occasion, both physically, in that it provides the platform on which the tea is brewed and poured, and socially, in that it creates a focal point around which participants gather. In

³⁸ Some writers insist that the correct term for the utensil is *chaxi* (茶洗) or bowl for washing tea (90, p. 61).

my fieldwork I observed three variants; ranked from the simplest to the most elaborate, these involved using:

- a *chachuan* (茶船) or tea boat (the left hand image in Figure 5.3);
- a *chapan* (茶盘) – middle image in Figure 5.3 - usually situated on a dedicated tea table or *chaji* (茶几);
- a grander, purpose built table that incorporates the *chapan* into the structure of the table itself, known as a *chatai* (茶台) – right hand image in Figure 5.3.



Figure 5-3: Three kinds of tea plate or tea table

The most obvious appeal of the *chachuan* is its compactness, convenience and portability. With a *chachuan* to hand, the only other utensils required to prepare and enjoy gongfu tea are a teapot or *gaiwan*, some cups, and a kettle for heating water. Another virtue is that it can be deployed to mark out the humblest, most everyday space as a place for drinking gongfu tea, as the shopkeeper in Figure 5-4 shows. The *chachuan*, more than any other object, brings the relaxed attentiveness and the unhurried tempo that defines Chaoshan gongfu tea into the everyday world. So far as I could observe, almost every shop and factory has at least one *chachuan* and an associated set of cups and teapot or *gaiwan*.



Figure 5-4: Drinking gongfu tea in shop in Chaozhou

In some instances, the functions of the *chachuan* are performed on a tea tray, or *chapan*. The *chapan* is a more prestigious utensil than a *chachuan*. A business person who wishes to entertain friends and associates with gongfu tea is likely to have a *chapan* in the office, like the one shown in the central picture in Figure 5.3 above. Often, the *chapan* sits on a

dedicated tea table, or *chaji*, which is usually made from a quality hardwood. Most homes in Chaoshan, I was told, have a *chaji* somewhere in the living room, with an associated *chapan*. Like the *chachuan*, a *chapan* has an upper level with perforations to allow discarded tea and water to flow into a tray below. In some instances (as shown in Figure 4.2 in the previous chapter), a plastic tube is fitted to the lower part of the *chapan* to allow fluids to drain away into a bucket or other receptacle below.

More elaborate still is the *chatai* – which also translates as ‘tea table’ – an example of which is shown in the right-hand image in Figure 5.3 above. This particular *chatai*, its owner explained, had been carved out of a single camphor tree. Sometimes, as in the example shown in Figure 5.3, the *chatai* is simply an elaborate table, and requires a *chapan* or *chachuan* for preparing the tea. Sometimes the perforations and drainage facilities are built into the structure of the *chatai* itself. While several tea-houses and tea-shops I visited housed a *chatai*, only in two domestic settings did I encounter them.

The other basic utensils are a teapot or *gaiwan*, and some cups. Often, the selection of the former is dictated as much by practical as by aesthetic considerations. In particular, the long, twisted leaves of *Fenghuang Dancong* tea do not lend themselves to being inserted into a conventional gongfu teapot, but require either a wide-rimmed teapot such as the one being used in Figure 5-8 below or – the more commonly used option so far as I could see – a *gaiwan*, such as the one being used to prepare *Fenghuang Dancong* – in Figure 5-5.



Figure 5-5: Preparing *Fenghuang Dancong* tea in a *gaiwan*

For other Oolong teas, such as *Tie Guanyin* or *Dahongpao*, most people would use either a purple clay teapot made in Yixing, Jiangsu Province, or a red clay teapot made locally in Chaozhou – or a porcelain *gaiwan*. Unglazed Yixing teapots are highly valued by tea lovers throughout China, in part because of the way in which the clay, over time, absorbs oils from successive brews, further enriching the flavor and aroma of the tea. Chaozhou

red clay teapots, also unglazed, share this property, though not, according to one of my participants, to the same degree as Yixing pots. Because of their capacity to absorb oils and enhance flavours, both Yixing and Chaozhou teapots should be ‘raised’ (*yang* 养). This is the same term used to refer to ‘raising’ a child, and testifies to the way in which these teapots are treated as living things rather than inert objects. Raising a teapot involves, firstly, using it for one kind of tea only; secondly, refraining from using soaps to wash it, but rather rinsing the pot and allowing it to dry naturally, so that the absorption process continues, and finally, drenching and buffing the outside of the pot in order to cultivate a lustre that a new pot lacks.

A glazed porcelain *gaiwan* does not have the capacity to ‘breathe’ and absorb aromas from the tea as an unglazed clay teapot does, and for that reason some tea drinkers prefer to use the latter. The white bowl of the *gaiwan* is, however, particularly well suited to viewing the colour and shape of the leaves and for enjoying the tea’s aroma, so it too appeals to many gongfu tea *aficionados*. As the examples in Figure 5.6 show, a *gaiwan* consists of three integrated components: saucer, bowl with flared lip, and lid. The *gaiwan* originated in the Ming dynasty in China (1368-1644), when it came to be used as a vessel both for preparing and drinking tea, the leaves being placed in the bowl and steeped in hot water (91, p. 16). Although the *gaiwan* used today is normally smaller than its Ming forebears, in many parts of China it is still used in this way, especially for green and white teas and other teas valued for their delicate flavours and aromas. The drinker normally holds the saucer and cup in one hand and uses the lid to hold back the leaves while drinking.

In preparing Chaoshan gongfu tea, however, the *gaiwan* is used as a vessel for brewing the tea, but not for drinking. Instead, the brewed tea is poured into small cups, just as it is when a teapot is used. As Figure 5.6 shows, handling the *gaiwan* in this way requires a certain dexterity, particularly as the host is expected to ensure that the tea in each participant’s cup is of the same strength and volume.



Figure 5-6: Pouring tea from a gaiwan

Sometimes, especially if there are too many guests to serve each of them from a single brew of the pot or *gaiwan*, the host will also make use of a small jug (usually around 150 ml capacity), known as a *gongdaobei* (公道杯). In this case, tea is poured first into the jug, and from there into each guest's cup. Like the *chachuan*, the *gongdaobei* is a modern innovation. In most instances where I observed people drinking gongfu tea with friends, family or associates, it was not used, although I was told that it is commonly used in tea-houses and other commercial establishments.

Today, the teacups used are likely to come not from *Ruo Shen Zhen Cang*, but from the town of Fengxi that borders Chaozhou., where the *cha chuan* also originated. The standard term for 'teacup' is *chabei*, but in Chaoshan they are also sometimes referred to as *chazhong* (茶盅). Most of the teacups I observed in use were of plain white porcelain, or with plain white interior and decorated exterior, or a white interior and unglazed exterior (eg the cups shown in Figure 5.9 below).

A number of other utensils were also sometimes used in preparing and serving gongfu tea. However, I shall hold descriptions of these over until discussing tea preparation itself.

5.1.5 Warming the pot, rinsing the cups

The final steps before tea preparation proper begins involve, firstly, pre-heating the teapot or *gaiwan* and, secondly, rinsing the cups in hot water, both to clean and pre-heat them³⁹.

The simplest procedure, which I observed on several occasions, involved pouring hot

³⁹ These correspond to steps 6 and 7 in the sequence prescribed in Chapter 3 above: (6) *Kai shui re guan* (开水热罐)- boil water, heat the teapot; (7) *Zai re cha zhong* (再热茶盅) - then use the water to heat the teacups.

water into the teapot or *gaiwan* from either a *shadiao* or kettle, then immediately tipping the water into the teacups, each of which was in turn emptied onto the *chapan* or *chachuan* – a combined process occupying no more than a few seconds. In some settings, especially where tea might be served to a wide variety of guests, such as a tea-shop, a separate bowl or pot, filled with hot water, was reserved for holding teacups. More *jiangjiu* or meticulous tea-hosts followed a traditional practice for rinsing the teacups known as *tangbei gunbei* (汤杯滚杯)- rolling the cups in boiling water. Each cup is first filled with hot water, then the host uses his or her fingers to roll each cup in the hot water contained by another cup – a practice calling for considerable dexterity to avoid scalding one’s fingers. The two upper pictures in Figure 5.7 (with apologies for poor definition; both photographs were opportunistic) demonstrate this practice. It is noteworthy that in neither of these tea-drinking events was there any hint of an occasion calling for refined practices. The hand at top left shown rinsing cups on a porcelain *cha chuan* belongs to a liquor wholesaler in Chaozhou who, at the end of the working day, happened to be sitting outside his shop, chatting and drinking gongfu tea with his wife and a friend. The young lady using a metal *cha chuan* was enjoying drinking tea with her family on a quiet Sunday morning, again in Chaozhou. Both settings opened onto the street.



Figure 5-7: Heating the pot, rinsing the cups: tradition and change

However, once we move away from the streets into offices, tea-houses and the homes of the more well-to-do, the practice of using one's fingers to roll the cups in hot water seems to be disappearing. Several participants in this study claimed that the traditional practice was now considered unhygienic, and had given way to the use of wooden tongs, or *jiazi* (夹子), for handling the cups, as shown in the two lower pictures in Figure 5.7.

5.2 Making the tea - pengcha (烹茶)

Once the water has boiled, and the pot/*gaiwan* and cups have been pre-heated and rinsed, the process of actually making the tea – *pengcha* (烹茶) – can begin. There are four basic stages: (1) putting tea-leaves in the pot or *gaiwan*; (2) rinsing the tea-leaves in hot water; (3) infusing the tea in hot water, and (4) pouring the tea into the cups.

5.2.1 Putting tea-leaves in the pot or *gaiwan* (nacha 纳茶)

According to Weng Huidong, the procedure for putting tea-leaves into the pot was an elaborate one, involving first tipping the leaves onto a sheet of paper, then sorting fine from coarse leaves, then tipping the leaves into the pot itself, coarse leaves first (86). The

reality as I observed it was more prosaic. On only one occasion did I see tea-leaves being tipped onto a sheet of paper before being placed in a teapot. The host on this occasion was Mr Ye Hanzhong, the tea shop proprietor and author mentioned above, who invited my wife and I to take part in a highly refined gongfu tea performance. In most instances, the host simply used their fingers to extract tea-leaves from their container and transfer them to the pot or *gaiwan*, as shown in Figure 5-8.



Figure 5-8: Putting tea-leaves into the pot (*nacha*)

With *Fenghuang Dancong* tea, in particular, this practice appeared to be universal, because, as the photograph on the far right in Figure 5-8 shows, the tea-leaves are quite long, and do not lend themselves to being picked up and moved with a spoon. The same photograph demonstrates another feature of preparing *Fenghuang Dancong* tea – the way in which the leaves fill the entire pot.

5.2.2 Rinsing the tea-leaves

As this point, the first infusion of tea takes place. This is not normally drunk, but rather used to rinse the leaves. The host pours hot water into the pot or *gaiwan*, just as if he or she were preparing tea for drinking, and from there pours it into the cups, from where it is discarded. Before pouring the tea into the cups, however, the host will perform one of those small acts that lend Chaoshan gongfu tea its unmistakable *jiangjiu* quality. This is the action known as *hu gai gua mo* (壶盖刮沫): using the lid to remove any bubbles or froth that have formed on top of the beverage. It is accomplished by a deft circular motion with the lid of the pot or *gaiwan*, the effect of which is to drive any bubbles first to the perimeter and then over the rim of the pot/*gaiwan*. Figure 5-9 illustrates the process. Although the gesture is a fleeting one, in my observations every gongfu tea host complied with it. If the vessel was a pot rather than a *gaiwan*, the host at this point would normally also pour scalding water over the pot itself once he or she had replaced the lid. This process, called *lin gai qu mo* (淋盖去沫) — drenching the lid to remove the bubbles - is partly to help create an even temperature on the outside as well as the inside of the pot, partly to get rid of any bubbles that have accumulated on the surface of the pot as a result of the previous step, and partly also by way of helping to ‘raise’ the pot, as described

above.

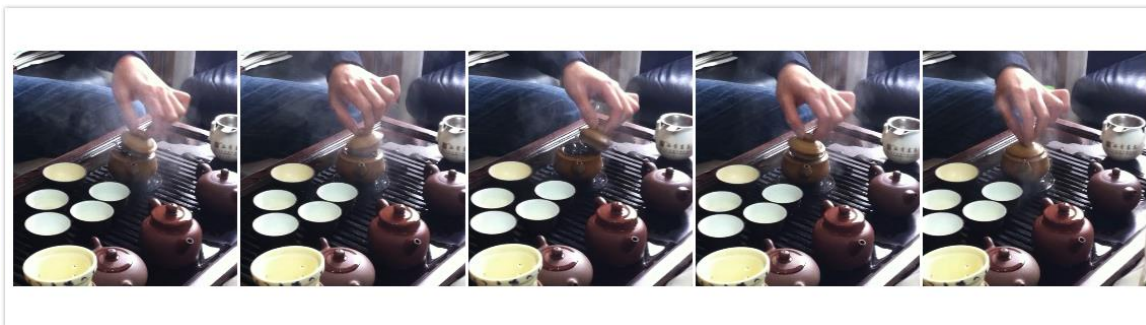


Figure 5-9: Using the lid to remove the bubbles (*hu gai gua mo*)

5.2.3 Brewing, pouring and serving the tea

Finally, the brewing and drinking can begin. The host once again pours hot water into the teapot or *gaiwan* and, after what he or she deems to be a suitable time for infusing the tea – this can be anything from ten seconds to about 1 ½ minutes, but in my observation, is usually less than a minute – pours the tea into the cups. Traditionally (and in contemporary literary accounts, such as the one outlined in Chapter 3 above), the process is described by two colourful metaphors, the first of which is *Guangong xun cheng* (关公巡城) or Guan Gong patrols the city. Guan Gong (which means Lord Guan) is a deity derived from a heroic historical figure who lived during the Three Kingdoms period that followed the demise of the Han Dynasty (209 BC – 220 AD) (92). The metaphor of Guan Gong ‘patrolling the city’ describes the practice of distributing the tea into cups in such a way that each guest receives the same amount of tea, of the same strength and colour. The second metaphor is *Han Xin dianbing* (韩信点兵) or Han Xin counts the troops. It refers to an even more ancient military leader, and signifies the practice of ensuring that every last drop of tea from the pot or *gaiwan* is distributed evenly among the cups of the guests, again to ensure that the tea offered to each guest shares the same characteristics.

It is difficult to imagine two metaphors more remote from daily life in 21st century Chaoshan, yet the practices they encode, so far as I could see, are enacted every time someone prepares Chaoshan gongfu tea, no matter how humble the setting. That is to say, as he or she pours tea from the pot or *gaiwan* into the cups of the guests, the host will take care to ensure that the tea in each cup is as identical as possible, and that each last drop is distributed evenly among the cups. (If the host chooses to use a *gongdaobei* as an intermediate container between teapot/*gaiwan* and the tea cups, neither of these two final steps occurs, since the tea is, in effect, premixed in the jug.)

5.3 Serving and drinking the tea

At this point, the host may simply, with a gesture of the hand, invite the guests to take a cup from the *chapan* or *chachuan*, or may pick up each cup in turn and place it in front of a guest - in which case the host will offer the tea first to any special guests and/or the oldest people present. Traditionally, according to one of my informants, the host would invite the guests to help themselves with the phrase '*jia, jia, jia*' (with each syllable uttered as a short, sharp sound, a little like a military parade-ground command). '*Jia*' is the Chaoshan dialect word for 'eat' – equivalent to the Chinese *chi* (吃) – but in this context it serves as an invitation to 'help yourself'. These days, according to the same informant, it is considered more polite for the host to hand each cup to the guest, although back in her home town, where people tend to know each other, such politeness is not considered necessary and people still invite their guests to *jia, jia, jia*.

The shift to a more formal politeness implied in the host handing each cup to a guest testifies to continuity as well as change, insofar as it retains the underlying meaning of preparing gongfu tea as a mark of friendliness and respect on the host's part, but doing so in a world that is changing. Change, moreover, can take many forms. Once – but only once, in a modern tea-house in Shantou that appeared to be cultivating a contemporary ambience of 'tea art' – I observed the use of a carved wooden fork, known as a *bei cha* (杯叉), for conveying tea cups to guests (see Figure 5-10). As with the *jiazi*, or tongs, referred to above and shown in the same picture, this is clearly designed to ensure that the host does not touch the cups with his or her fingers, thereby perhaps tapping into contemporary understandings of cleanliness, and attempting to attach added elegance to the event.



Figure 5-10: Tongs (*jiazi*) and fork (*bei cha*) for handling cups in a modern tea-house

Drinking tea, above all, is about relaxing and chatting with friends, family, colleagues. At the same time, the importance of *jiangjiu* in practising gongfu tea makes it more than

just another social lubricant, like drinking coffee with friends or having a beer in a pub in a western society. The process of preparing tea, and the small cups from which it is drunk, foster a quiet attentiveness, in which participants, as one of my informants put it, ‘slow down to taste the tea’: ‘*manmande qu pincha*’ (‘慢慢地去品茶’). With larger cups, she added, participants would be unlikely to notice subtle differences between different brews of the same tea - unlikely, to use a phrase often used in Chaoshan, to *savour* the tea (*tan cha* 品茶). Typically, participants in a gongfu tea drinking session will pay attention to at least three characteristics of each round of tea served: its colour (*tangse* 汤色), aroma (*xiangqi* 香气) and taste (*ziwei* 滋味). Those with a stronger interest may also attend to the shape of the leaf both before it has been infused (*waixing* 外形) and after it has been infused (*yedi* 叶底).

When guests have drained the cups, they normally place them back on the *chapan* or *chachuan*, thereby signaling that they are ready for the next round. The host refills the pot or *gaiwan*, waits for the tea to infuse, then repeats the process of pouring the tea. All of the teas popular among drinkers in Chaoshan are suited to several brews, with the best rounds often being the second or third brews. Eventually, however, the taste of the tea becomes thin or bitter, at which point the host may switch to another variety, or prepare a new brew of the same type of tea. In this way, a tea-drinking session can fill a short period between other duties, or extend over several hours.

5.4 Gongfu tea and mental states

The account above necessarily focuses on the outer, visible dimensions of gongfu tea as an everyday practice. In exploring the inner dimension I sometimes found myself in a curious situation: because for Chaoshan people gongfu tea is such a taken-for-granted part of everyday life it is not, for most, an object of reflection. You don’t think about gongfu tea, you just do it. So far as I was aware, my questioning did not trouble anyone, but several people remarked on how odd it felt to be thinking about something that was so much part of their lives, but about which they hadn’t previously had occasion to reflect.

I quickly learned that the people with whom I drank tea and interviewed were generally skeptical about accounts that endowed gongfu tea with spirituality or religiosity. One man – Mr Zheng – was emphatic on this point: ‘*Buyao tai shenhua le*’ (‘不要太神化了’) – ‘Don’t spiritualize it’ – he insisted. His argument, however, was not that Chaoshan gongfu tea does not have an inner dimension – a *jingshen* (精神) – but that its inner meaning does not lend itself to being codified or even described in books, and that attempts to achieve this should not, in general, be trusted. Like Wang Ling whom I cited at the beginning of this chapter, Mr Zheng distinguished between *chayi* or tea art, which he saw as a set of

techniques and skills that one could read about and acquire, and *chadao*, the true meaning of which in his view had to be *experienced* by sitting down and drinking gongfu tea with people, including ordinary people.

But while Mr Zheng and others were clearly wary of ‘spiritualizing’ gongfu tea, many attached importance to the mental states associated with it. Three themes emerged from my fieldwork. Firstly, and perhaps universally, Chaoshan gongfu tea is a *social* experience, one that nourishes not just any kind of social interaction, but a relaxing (*fangsong* 放松) way of maintaining friendships. Secondly, and closely related to the first theme, gongfu tea fosters a feeling of tranquility – ‘*ningjing de ganjue*’ (‘宁静的感觉’) as one reflective participant put it:

In Chaoshan, tea is like a bridge connecting people with people, and people use tea as a way of maintaining their relationships with family and friends. Gongfu tea fosters a sense of tranquillity, which is valuable in this world where so much is fast and busy⁴⁰.

Thirdly, while for many people in Chaoshan gongfu tea is a way of slowing down and relaxing, it was also described by several participants as having an energizing effect on the mind. Mr Zheng – the man quoted above as cautioning against spiritualizing gongfu tea – described gongfu tea as having two simultaneous effects: *yishen* (怡神), or soothing the spirit, and *tishen* (提神) – lifting, or stimulating the mind. It may be this combination of a calming and stimulating effect that accounts for the response of another of my participants who, when asked why he drank gongfu tea every evening after dinner, said it was partly habit – *xiguan* – and partly because it helped him to think: ‘*you zhu sikao*’ (‘有助思考’). Others referred to a vitalizing effect of drinking gongfu tea: ‘*he le hen jingshen*’ (‘喝了很精神’) as one woman put it: ‘drink, and I’m revived’.

The question of whether the mental effects of gongfu tea are due to the distinctive social context created by tea-drinking, or to the pharmacological properties of the strongly-concentrated tea being consumed is an intriguing one, that I would not presume to answer on the evidence gathered in this study. Clearly, several reciprocal relationships come into play: taking part in a session of Chaoshan gongfu tea invites at the outset a letting go of stresses and worries – ‘*fangxia fannao*’ (‘放下烦恼’) or putting aside one’s worries,

⁴⁰ ‘在潮汕，工夫茶就像联系人们关系的桥梁，大家用茶作为朋友或者家庭成员之间沟通的工具。茶能带给人宁静的感觉，这在越来越繁忙的现代生活中是非常难得的。’

as one female participant put it. At the same time, the setting, practices, and no doubt the tea itself all serve to nurture the mental effects discussed above – the *ningjing de ganjue*. As another (male) participant put it ‘*He cha, he dao yiding de jingjie jiu shi yi zhong xinjing*’⁴¹: ‘when drinking tea reaches a certain level, what you enjoy is a certain state of mind’. Rather than try to disentangle cause from effect, it is perhaps more useful to see the mental effects of gongfu tea as an outcome of several interacting factors, as Mr Zheng did, for example, when he remarked that real tea drinkers understood the importance of a good environment, good tea sets, good water, good tea-leaves and a good mental state. That is to say, an appropriate mental state is both a precondition and a product of practising gongfu tea.

5.5 Conclusion

So what conclusions can we draw from these observations and discussions? Firstly, they show that preparing and drinking Chaoshan gongfu tea, even in an everyday setting, retains a traditional structure and sequence that requires attention to detail, or *jiangjiu*. Secondly, however, nowhere did I observe anything that resembled the slavish observance of a ritual. At almost every step in the process, tea hosts made choices, not only in the kinds of tea selected, but with respect to such matters as the use of pots or *gaiwan*, ways of rinsing cups, gestures in offering tea to guests. Although a gongfu tea-drinking event has its own, unhurried tempo, it is suffused with creativity and a quiet vitality. Thirdly, each action or gesture (as de Certeau’s model of everyday practice would lead us to expect) at once communicates a social meaning, and at the same time represents an adaptation to both the constraints and opportunities to hand, whether in terms of the kinds of tea available, the utensils, or the time that hosts and guests alike are able to set aside for drinking tea. Some of the social meanings, such as understandings of what constitutes good hygiene, are themselves possibly changing. Fourthly, it is through these constraints and opportunities that the settings in which gongfu tea-drinking occurs impinge upon the host’s options and decisions. These may, in some cases, undermine the perceived viability of drinking gongfu tea at all. Chaoshan people who leave the area – as so many do, either temporarily or permanently – may find it difficult to maintain their customary practices, either because of the sheer pace of life in bigger cities and competing demands on time, or because – as some people told me – without other Chaoshan people around them, there seemed to be no place for preparing and drinking gongfu tea. For others, however, including Chaoshan people living away from their hometowns, changes in the immediate settings or wider social milieu lead to adaptation rather than the

⁴¹ “喝茶，喝到一定的境界就是一种心境”

abandonment of traditional practices. It is through such adaptations that traditions endure, rather than through attempts to freeze traditional practices as rigid, ritualistic rules. This chapter, I hope, conveys some of the many ways in which Chaoshan people are keeping alive the deeper traditions of Chaoshan gongfu tea as an everyday practice, even while adapting them to a fast-changing world.

6. CHAOSHAN GONGFU TEA AS TEA ART

Chaoshan gongfu tea, as we have seen, embodies meticulous attention to detail, or *jiangjiu*. In terms of a dichotomy grounded in Chinese cultural tradition, it combines characteristics usually found in contrasting entities: those that are *su* (俗) – that is popular, commonplace – and those that are *ya* (雅), or elegant and refined. Chaoshan gongfu tea brings refinement into the everyday world, the everyday world into the domain of the refined. Among some regular tea drinkers, Chaoshan gongfu tea is also practiced as a form of ‘tea art’ or *chayi*. In this chapter, I explore what this entails. I shall argue that it is accomplished, not by adherence to a pre-defined model of Chaoshan gongfu tea as tea art (much less a ‘tea ceremony’, as it is sometimes described in English language writing), but rather by devoting a high level of attentiveness, and acquiring expertise, with respect to one or more of the practices associated with gongfu tea.

6.1 Conceptualising gongfu tea as tea art (*chayi*)

All of the participants in the study demonstrated attentiveness and expertise with respect to preparing, serving and drinking gongfu tea. Some of them had gone a step further and devoted particular attention to refining some of their tea-related practices. For most, the additional attentiveness was partial and selective. One person, for example, might devote particular attentiveness to teapots, while another might care little about the quality of the pot but be very attentive to the aroma and appearance of the tea-leaves, and how best to store them. Gongfu tea as an art, in other words, could not be adequately conceptualized as a single, static set of practices, to be contrasted in either/or fashion with gongfu tea as *xiguan* (everyday habit), or *fengsu* (custom). Rather it was something best thought of in relative terms – a particular gongfu practice could be more or less endowed with the attributes of an ‘art’ – and it was multi-dimensional: that is, it could be highly ‘artistic’ along one dimension, less so along another. In addition to attentiveness to preparing, serving and drinking gongfu tea which, as already mentioned, appears to be common to all regular drinkers of Chaoshan gongfu tea, my observations suggested that five main practices served as vehicles for cultivating gongfu tea as an art. These were:

- Creating an appropriate and distinctive *setting* for drinking gongfu tea;
- Selecting and purchasing high quality teas;
- Setting time aside especially for tasting high quality teas;
- Cultivating knowledge about, and using, high quality tea utensils, and
- Incorporating philosophical and spiritual aspects of Chinese tea culture into one’s tea-related practices.

Table 6.1 depicts each of the five dimensions as a continuum, from ‘low’ to ‘high’, along which any given practice could, in principle, be located.

Table 6-1: Gongfu tea art as a multi-dimensional continuum

LOW	Attentiveness to	HIGH
←	Creating a setting for gongfu tea	→
←	Selecting and purchasing high quality teas	→
←	Setting time aside especially for tasting high quality teas	→
←	Utilising high quality utensils	→
←	Incorporating philosophical/spiritual aspects of tea culture	→

Each dimension is explored further below.

6.2 Creating a setting

Settings for drinking gongfu tea range from the crude, makeshift and temporary – for example, from the simple wooden tables illustrated in Figures 5.4 and 5.6 in the previous chapter - to the elaborate *chatai* shown in the far right of Figure 5.3 above, carved out of a single camphor tree. This particular *chatai* not only defines a space set aside for preparing and drinking tea, as distinct from a corner of a crowded shop or, in some cases, a space temporarily appropriated from a public pavement, but also endows that space with aesthetic refinement. Two participants in this study – and a number of other Chaoshan gongfu tea enthusiasts whom I subsequently met – have dedicated entire rooms to drinking tea. One of these, between the time of my first field visit to Chaozhou in 2010 and returning in 2012, had converted his garage into a tea-room, complete with specially commissioned calligraphy and, in addition to the standard utensils for preparing and storing tea, a variety of urns, ceramic vases, statues and other *objets d’art*, all representing Chinese tea culture in one way or another. Here, he often hosted visits from other dedicated gongfu tea drinkers to sit and chat.

Another had created a tea-room in what had been a small courtyard in a Qing Dynasty house in a quiet, narrow lane in Chaozhou’s Old Town. The owner had covered the courtyard with a floating roof of transparent material, with a result that it remained open to the wind but not the rain. The courtyard area and an adjoining room and kitchen together constituted a private tea-house, which the owner had called *Ganlu Xuan* (甘露軒)- literally, ‘small room of sweet dew’. One wall of the courtyard supported an

assortment of tropical plants and a water feature which led a constant stream of gurgling water into a large ceramic pot in which seven or eight gold fish turned lazily. The loudest sound in the *Ganlu Xuan* much of the time was that of water running over leaves and clay. The owner explained that he had created the tea-room primarily as a space in which to enhance the appreciation of tea, but the house also contained a single bedroom let out as a guesthouse. The place was, he said, a *xiao yizhan* (小驿站) – that is, a traditional stopping place for people on journeys.

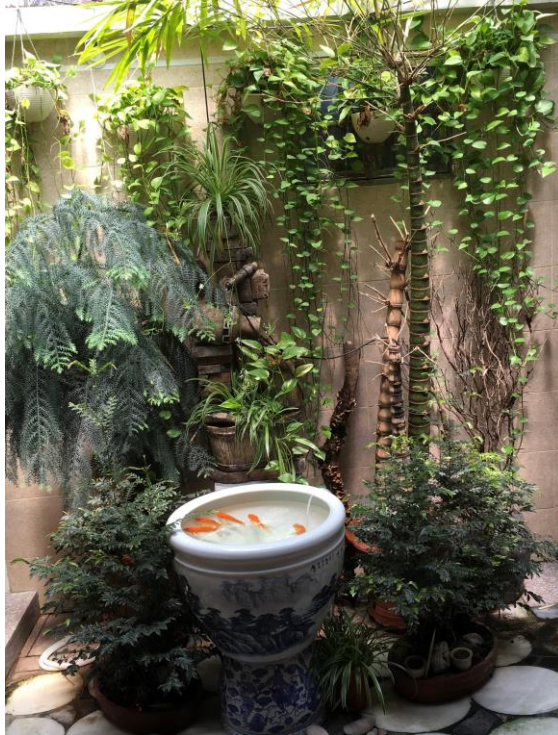


Figure 6-1: Tea-room interior, Chaozhou

Not every gongfu tea enthusiast has either the desire or the space to dedicate an entire room to drinking tea. More often, a space was defined by an elegant *chapan*, or tea plate, positioned on a dedicated table, as can be seen in several photographs in Chapter 5 above.

Conspicuously absent from the world of Chaoshan gongfu tea art were tea-houses. Elsewhere in the PRC and in Taiwan, tea art houses, as mentioned earlier, have played a prominent role in fostering contemporary interest in Chinese tea art. None of the participants in this study, however, frequented tea-houses regularly, and several dismissed them as commercial places run by people who knew little about gongfu tea. The situation, however, may be changing. On my most recent visit to Chaozhou – in April 2017 – I came upon a tea-house recently opened by a young local couple. They had converted another Qing Dynasty house for the purpose, this time leaving the central courtyard open and using the rooms located around the perimeter as semi-private tea-rooms. The décor and utensils in these rooms, as Figure 6.2 shows, evoked an ambience

of elegance and simplicity, with guests expected to sit on the floor on cane cushions. In Shantou, I was told that, while there are no old tea-houses, modern tea-houses have begun to appear in recent years, aimed at attracting younger people.



Figure 6-2: In a modern tea-house, Chaozhou

An example is the *Lu Yu Chalou* (陆羽茶楼) or Lu Yu Tea-house that occupies the whole of a modern two-storey building in the central business district of Shantou. On the afternoon of my visit in March 2012, a row of late model cars parked outside suggested that this was a place frequented by the well-to-do. Once inside, patrons could choose from two settings: the ground floor was taken up by a bright and airy open space containing restaurant-style booths around the perimeter. The upper floor was divided into rooms – called *baoxiang* (包厢) - where small groups could gather in privacy. The décor in the rooms evoked a modern space for quiet relaxation, combining tradition with modernity: on one wall a Chinese brush painting, against another, a large flat-screen TV. Patrons wishing to use a *baoxiang* paid a modest charge (14 yuan, or just under \$AUD3), and there was also a minimum charge of 40 yuan (about \$AUD8) for drinks and/or food purchases.

In attempting to define itself as a contemporary expression of a hallowed Chinese cultural tradition, the tea-house relied heavily on the figure of Lu Yu, the Tang Dynasty author of the *Cha Jing* or *The Classic of Tea* (5, 93). Lu Yu was everywhere, appearing not only in the name of the tea-house itself, but also on the first page of the menu, which was given over to an account of his life, and also on that quintessentially consumerist accessory – a box of tissues. The tissues supplied by the establishment had the opening chapter of the *Cha Jing* printed on one side of the box.

The menu offered a variety of teas from southern China: *Fenghuang Dancong* from Chaoshan, *Tie Guanyin* and *Dahongpao* from neighbouring Fujian province, *Pu Er* tea from Yunnan province, and High Mountain Oolong tea from Taiwan, all of them sold in

small, vacuum sealed packets packets containing about 3 grams, enough for a single *pao* or pot of tea, the purchase of which was complemented with access to unlimited hot water. A single *pao* could be used several times. With each variety, a hierarchy of quality levels was available, from a basic packet costing around 78 Yuan (a little under \$AUD16) to a packet of so-called ‘tribute’ tea, for around 268 Yuan (around \$54). Also on the menu were coffee, spirits, beer, milk shakes, soft drinks, ice cream, milk tea, preserved fruits, cigarettes, and snacks. Gongfu tea, in other words, was just one of a range of recreational beverages on offer.

My visit to the *Lu Yu Chalou* was facilitated, at my request, by one of my middle aged, female participants, who prior to this occasion had never patronised the place, despite having been a regular and frequent drinker of gongfu tea over several decades. Older people like her, she said, preferred to drink tea in their own or each others’ homes. Her daughter, on the other hand, had visited this tea-house several times. She pointed out that, with young children and perhaps grandparents in the house, home was not always a relaxing place in which to meet with friends. Tea-houses like this offered an alternative, where she and her friends could get together to chat or play poker or mahjong.

The *Lu Yu Chalou* appeared to be an attempt to commoditize Chinese tea culture in general, and Chaoshan gongfu tea in particular, in the sense in which Appadurai uses that term to signify the processes under which things are drawn into systems of commodity exchange (41). As noted above in the Introduction, the obverse of commoditization, according to Kopytoff, is a process of resistance grounded in culture, of insisting that some things are culturally out of bounds to the commoditization process (42). Did my participant’s refusal to patronize the *Lu Yu Chalou* – except as a favour to me – and the general lack of interest shown by all of my Chaoshan-based participants in attending local tea-houses, signify resistance to the commoditization of Chaoshan gongfu tea, or is giving it that name imbuing it with a political dimension that, in reality, it does not have? I do not feel qualified, on the basis of my research, to give a categorical answer. What I think is clear is that, while the market forces that drive the production and consumption of tea globally are undoubtedly extremely powerful, the deep roots of Chaoshan gongfu tea in the homes, offices, factories and other settings in which everyday life takes place probably mean that, at least in the foreseeable future, gongfu tea will not be completely commoditized.

6.3 Attentiveness to selecting and purchasing quality tea

Taste for tea, as Yu (84) and Zhang (94) show in the case of *puer* tea from Yunnan, is a

sometimes fickle cultural construct shaped by multiple social processes. Yu describes how, in the 1990s, aged *puer* tea was transformed from an all-but-ignored tea by Taiwanese consumers into a highly sought-after and therefore costly variety through the cultivation of what he calls a ‘taste of aging’ by tea merchants, publicists and tea enthusiasts. From Taiwan, the ‘taste of aging’ rapidly spread to Hong Kong, the PRC and Southeast Asia, generating an extraordinary market boom as *puer* tea became not only a valued drink but also the object of an investment frenzy. Zhang (94) traces the development of the boom in Yunnan Province, the home of *puer* tea, and the equally spectacular market collapse that ensued in 2007.

In Chaoshan, where tastes for tea appear to be more stable, discernment in selecting teas does not necessarily mean buying the most expensive teas. Rather, my fieldwork suggests that it is a product of two inter-related practices: first, becoming knowledgeable about different teas, where and how they are grown, and what their peculiar qualities are; second, purchasing teas from a trusted source. Both of these practices, as I shall show, take place within a context still shaped largely by local rather than wider national factors.

One of my participants, a middle-level manager in a travel agency in Chaozhou, finds it difficult amid the cramped space and time that her office routines allow to indulge fully her love of gongfu tea, but continues to cultivate a discerning palate. We met in her office where she prepared, firstly, a pot of high mountain *Fenghuang Dancong* tea that retailed for more than 1,000 RMB per *jin* (i.e. roughly \$AUD400 per kilogram). High mountain teas are prized for their flavor and aroma; as a local saying puts it: cloudy, misty mountains produce good tea (*Yunwu gaoshan chu haocha*⁴²). The high mountain farms, however, are said to produce lower yields and fewer harvests than tea farms at lower altitudes. The farmers there are also, according to several of my informants, less likely to use fertilizers and pesticides, another reason why their teas are more highly valued than teas from lower altitudes. The best high mountain teas of all, this participant explained, are those harvested in Springtime – but only if they are put aside until around the time of Mid-Autumn Festival before drinking. If consumed too early, they will generate internal heat (*shanghuo* 上火), one symptom of which is discomfort in the throat.

Later, she prepared another *Fenghuang Dancong* tea that sells for less than one-tenth of the price of the first one. An undiscerning drinker, she suggested, might find it difficult to distinguish between the two, or even prefer the cheaper tea because it has a stronger aroma. But the aroma of the cheaper tea, she explained, is an example of ‘floating aroma’ (*qingfu de xiang* 轻浮的香), more immediately noticeable, but of less true quality in the

⁴²云雾高山出好茶。

minds of most discerning tea-drinkers than the deeper, subtler aroma (*you diyun de xiang* 有底韵的香) of the higher-priced tea. Moreover, the aroma of the higher quality tea, but not that of its cheaper counterpart, lingers in the cup after it has been emptied.

The distinction between floating aroma and its subtler, deeper counterpart was one often mentioned by gongfu tea drinkers in evaluating *Fenghuang Dancong* and other Oolong teas. Another term used for the floating aroma was *piao xiang* (飘香), or ‘flighty aroma’. Some people lamented that teas with floating or flighty aroma seemed to be increasing in popularity, particularly among younger tea drinkers. Closely connected with the distinction between floating or deep aroma was the notion of *huigan* (回甘), a term that literally translates as ‘returning sweetness’ and refers to the propensity of some high quality Oolong teas to leave the drinker with a residual, lingering sweetness in the throat, that sometimes remains – in my experience – for long after the tea-drinking event itself has finished. Teas with floating or flighty aromas, and lower quality teas generally, do not generate *huigan*.

The participant mentioned several other criteria that she used for assessing the quality of tea: firstly, lower quality teas sometimes have a ‘sharp’ taste (*ci de weidao* 刺的味道), absent from higher quality teas. The adjective used here – *ci* – when used as a verb connotes ‘stabbing’, as a noun, ‘thorn’. Secondly, cheap tea left too long in the pot becomes bitter (*ku* 苦); good tea becomes strong (*nong* 浓) but not bitter. Good teas are picked from tender shoots (*nen ya* 嫩芽) when the leaves are fine and slender (*hen xi* 很细); the leaves of cheap teas, by comparison, are course and rough (*cucuo* 粗糙). Yet for all her claimed skills in discernment, this participant did not consider herself an expert. With perhaps more than a tinge of modesty, she described herself as still being a *waihang* (外行), or novice. She said she could not always judge a tea, as some could, from the aroma of the leaves. She also added, as did several participants in the study, that nowadays some producers of *Fenghuang Dancong* tea added chemicals to enhance the flavor or aroma of the tea.

6.3.1 Tea and trust

It is partly because of the currency of these suspicions that the issue of trust in connection with sourcing tea is salient in Chaoshan. This is the second part of most strategies to ensure access to good quality tea; a discerning tea-drinker takes pains to ensure access to one or more trusted suppliers. I observed three strategies for doing this among participants in this study, all of them ways of adapting to the distinctive ways in which tea – in particular *Fenghuang Dancong* tea – is produced and marketed in Chaoshan.

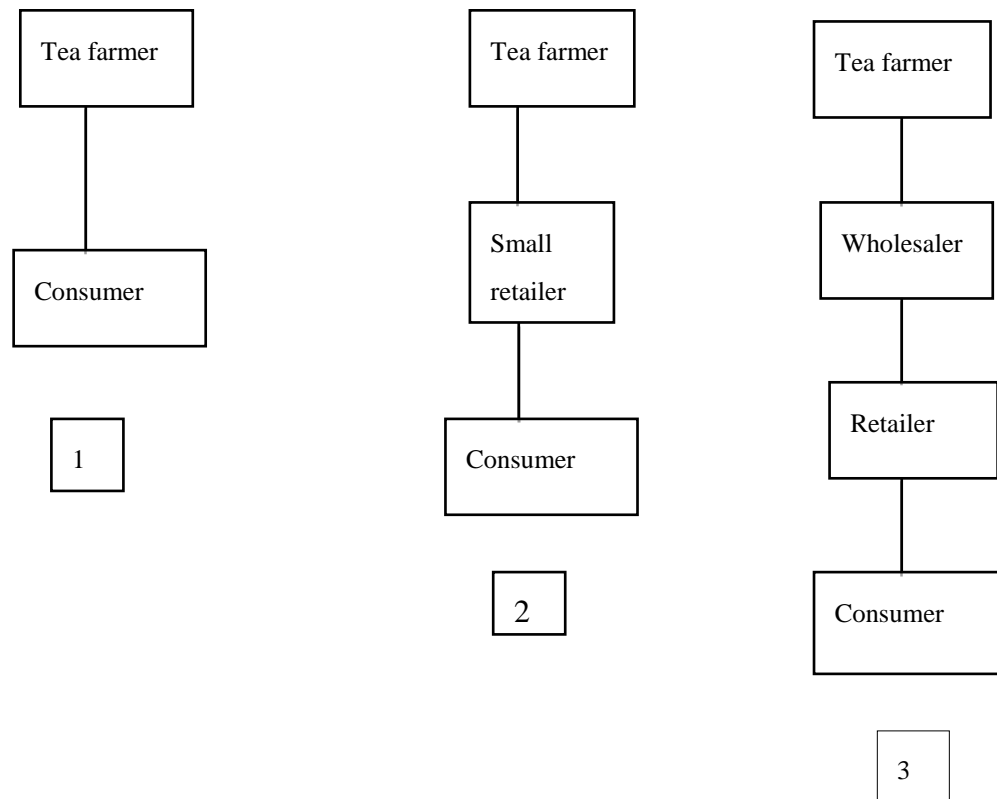


Figure 6-3: Supply pathways between farmer and consumer

In pathway 1 – the simplest pathway – the consumer buys tea directly from the farmer. One participant, who lives in Jie Yang, travels about two hours by car into the Da Bei mountains, where he regularly purchases tea from a particular farmer. Another participant drives from Chaozhou to the Fenghuang Mountains shortly after the Spring harvesting time each year to taste the new season’s teas. If he likes a particular tea, he may negotiate to buy the farmer’s entire output. Alternatively, if he believes that some particular raw leaves will make good tea, he may ask the farmer to reserve some of the processed tea for him. Most participants in this study, however, utilized the second pathway, in which the consumer purchases tea from a local merchant whom he or she trusts, who in turn purchases directly from tea farmers. The third pathway is the one that most closely resembles contemporary commercial practice in many places and industries: the consumer purchases tea from a retailer, who in turn purchases fully processed (and usually packaged) tea from a wholesaler. Although the small sample on which this study is based precludes any quantitative estimates, my observations suggest that this is less commonly used for purchasing tea in Chaoshan than the second pathway.

While the third pathway is marked, at least in part, by market-type exchange relationships, the first two pathways involve more personal relationships. Central to all three is the tea farmer. As mentioned earlier, most of the tea grown in Chaoshan is *Fenghuang Dancong*

Oolong tea produced on small, family owned farms of around 10 hectares, known as *jiating zuofang* (家庭作坊)⁴³. Mr Zhou⁴⁴ is one such *chanong* (茶农), as tea farmers are known. His family has been farming for several generations on their land of a little over 10 hectares, at an altitude of around 900 metres. The land is scattered in several small plots on the mountainside, and contains trees up to 80 years in age, with one prized tree around 200 years old.



Figure 6-4: Tea trees, Fenghuang Mountain

On the wet, misty March morning that I am introduced to Mr Zhou, he is half way through drying tea-leaves that had been picked the previous day. Later in the afternoon, a tea wholesaler based in Fenghuang township at the foot of the mountain, is expected to drive up to Mr Zhou's farm and take delivery of these leaves. The Spring harvesting season is under way. Each day for several weeks, weather permitting, a team of seasonal workers pick the top two leaves, or in some instances the top four leaves, and a bud from the branches of Mr Zhou's trees and bring them to the farmhouse. At around 4 pm on the same day – again, provided that it is not raining – the newly picked leaves are spread out on bamboo trays to dry for about 30 minutes in the sun. This process, known as *shaiqing* (晒青), is the first of several steps that will take place over the next few hours, all designed to reduce the moisture content of the leaves. Next comes the process of indoor drying, or *liangqing* (晾青), in which the bamboo trays are brought in from the sun to cool off and continue drying. (If it is raining, then the leaves must go straight into the *liangqing* stage, which results in a lower quality final product.)

Next, at around 6 pm, the delicate process of oxidizing the leaves, known as *langqing*

⁴³ *Dancong* is the name given to the highest grade Oolong tea grown in the region. Two other grades of Oolong tea grown in Chaoshan region are *shui xian* (水仙), the lowest grade, and *lang cai* (浪菜) – medium quality. The terminology is confusing, as in other tea-growing areas such as Wuyi Mountain in Fujian province, Shui Xian teas can be of very high quality and price.

⁴⁴ A pseudonym.

(浪青) or *zuoqing* (做青) begins⁴⁵. More than any other single part of the tea production process, this will determine the quality of the final product. Mr Zhou explains that, whereas he is happy to delegate other parts of the production process to other workers, only he or his son will conduct the *lang qing*. It begins with Mr Zhou or his son spreading the leaves out on a tray and gently scooping them up and tossing them with his hands for about three to five minutes – as shown in Figure 6.5. At the end of this period, the leaves are left on the tray until, two hours after the first cycle commenced, the process is repeated. In all, the cycle usually occurs five times, the last time commencing at around 2 am. By the end of the fifth cycle, the edges of the leaves should have turned reddish in colour: an indication that partial oxidation has occurred. At this point the leaves, still on their bamboo trays, are covered with a cloth and placed on racks until the following morning.



Figure 6-5: The process of *lang qing* - allowing the tea-leaves to oxidise

At around 7 am the next stage takes place. This is known as *shaqing* (杀青) or ‘killing the oxidation’ by heating the leaves. The leaves are tipped into a rotating tumbler under which a fire has been lit, and tumbled around at around 90 degrees Celsius for up to two hours (see left hand picture in Figure 6.6). At the end of this process, the leaves, now stabilized in their semi-oxidised state, are taken out of the tumbler and tossed into another machine located in the same room, to undergo a process known as *rounian* (揉碾), or rolling the leaves (Figure 6.6, second from left). This gives the leaves a distinctive twisted shape. After about 15 minutes in the *rounian* machine, the leaves are transferred to another mechanical tumbler, where they are rotated to help the leaves separate from each other (third from left). At this stage, although the tea-leaves have acquired their final shape, they are still greenish in colour – as in the foreground of the fourth photo from left

⁴⁵ The term commonly used in English language accounts of tea production is ‘fermenting’ or ‘fermentation’. This term, however, generally refers to a process involving change brought about by a chemical agent, such as the action of yeast in converting sugar to ethyl alcohol. In the case of ‘fermenting’ tea, however, no such chemical agent is involved; the change brought about in the tea-leaves, involving the release of enzymes, is a product of drying and exposure to air. Hence it is more accurately called ‘oxidation’. To complicate matters, there is one exception in the world of tea production: artificially ripened Puer tea acquires its distinctive appearance and taste as a result of a controlled process of fermentation involving microbial agents present in the tea.

in Figure 6.6.



Figure 6-6: Steps in producing *Fenghuang Dancong* tea

The leaves are now ready for the final stage of their transformation into *Fenghuang Dancong* tea. This is a drying process known as *honggan* (烘干), and is in fact the process in which Mr Zhou was engaged when I met him around mid-morning. The tea-leaves are spread out on bamboo racks, which are then placed in drying racks, above a wood fire augmented by an electric fan (Figure 6.6, right hand picture). *Honggan* is repeated three times, with each cycle lasting anywhere between eight minutes and an hour. Mr Zhou judges when each *honggan* is complete by the smell of the leaves.

Tea farmers get little sleep during the harvesting time. Every one of the steps described above, up to and including the first *honggan*, must be conducted in a continuous sequence that begins immediately after the leaves are picked. Only when the first *honggan* has been completed, according to Mr Zhou, does the farmer have any flexibility, in that the second and third *honggan* can, if necessary, be done later. This option is not available today, however, because the local wholesaler has already contracted to buy today's entire output. I watch as Mr Zhou places the trays on the racks for the final session of drying. Later, he removes the trays and tips the tea into large bags of clear plastic, each about the size of two pillow-cases.

It is in this form that the tea passes from the farmer to the wholesaler. It is a form known as *maocha* (毛茶) which, while suitable for drinking, has yet to undergo further processing by the wholesaler before entering the market. This particular tea is a high quality *Dancong* variety for which the wholesaler has agreed to pay ¥800 per jin – equivalent to around \$AUD320 per kg. Late in the afternoon, Mrs Chen⁴⁶ the wholesaler arrives and takes delivery of the bags. She also offers my wife and I a ride back into Fenghuang town. Almost every day since early March, she tells me, she has driven up the mountain to inspect and purchase newly harvested tea. Yesterday she had examined Mr Zhou's freshly picked leaves and bought them on the spot. She described Mr Zhou as one of the best tea makers in the area, and also one of the fairest; he wouldn't try to bargain

⁴⁶ A pseudonym.

for an unreasonable price.

Mrs Chen's shop opens onto one of the main streets in the middle of Fenghuang town. Here, sometime in the next few days, the tea that she has just purchased from Mr Zhou will undergo two further processes. The first is a sorting process to separate leaves from stalks and broken leaves, the second another drying, similar to the *honggan* conducted by Mr Zhou. As we arrive at the shop, several women and girls are already sorting another consignment of *maocha*, sitting on stools around a bamboo tray. The wholesaler, in other words, is actually part of the production process.

These two steps mark the end of tea processing, at least for the time being. The tea is now ready to be sold to retailers or consumers and, until that happens, will be stored in large, airtight containers on the wholesaler's premises. Depending on its condition, it may also be taken out and further dried every few months until it is sold. Most of the tea that Mrs Chen purchases is sold to retailers elsewhere in Chaoshan, although she also supplies to buyers from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Other tea merchants who also buy direct from farmers sell directly to consumers. Mr Zhao⁴⁷, for example, owns a small tea-shop in Chaozhou with frontage on a quiet street, alongside several other tea-shops. He sells only *Fenghuang Dancong* teas, which he buys as *maocha* directly from tea farmers in the mountains. Each year, around Qingming, he travels into the mountains and stays there for two or three days, selecting and buying. His family also owns a tea farm, but he explains that it does not produce enough for his business and, in any case, tea from the farm is of low to mid quality only. So he buys from other farmers.

I was directed to Mr Zhao by a tea drinker who told me that he purchased most of his tea from him. Mr Zhao, the drinker told me, was trustworthy and very knowledgeable about *Fenghuang Dancong* tea. Once again, the twin attributes of trustworthiness and knowledge are highlighted. Merchants like Mrs Chen and Mr Zhao buy tea from farmers whose integrity and expertise they trust. Connoisseurs seek out merchants like Mr Zhao on similar grounds. Sociologically, this is a localized, regional world built on relatively short supply chains, on social relationships rather than the anonymous transactions more typical of markets, and on trust in designated individuals rather than faith in rules and regulations.

Regulatory standardization is not entirely absent. Indeed, here as in other tea-growing regions in China, governments have been trying to bring a greater degree of regulatory

⁴⁷ A pseudonym.

order and quality control to the industry⁴⁸. Another participant in this study, who also runs a tea wholesale business in Chaozhou, has instituted a quality control procedure, under which all of the tea that he purchases is sent to a laboratory where it is tested for levels of pesticides or other chemicals present. If these levels are low enough, the tea will be sold with a government QS (Quality Safety) label attached. The wholesaler claims that his is one of only five companies in Chaozhou that use the QS system, and that among these, only his company complies fully with all of the procedures entailed in QS accreditation. By way of contrast, when I asked Mr Zhao whether or not he made use of any formal quality control processes or agencies, he said no, that he relied on his own judgement, although, he added, a few years ago he completed a two-year part-time course in tea-tasting.

6.4 Setting time aside for gongfu tea

Drinking gongfu tea takes time – unhurried time. Earlier, I suggested that Chaoshan people do not consciously *make* time for gongfu tea, any more than we make time to breathe. Some people, however, do make time to enhance their enjoyment of gongfu tea. In Chaozhou, several study participants belonged to an informal group of friends who were in the habit of meeting intermittently in each others' houses for tea-drinking evenings. One of these occurred during my most recent visit to Chaozhou. In all, nine people gathered in the *Ganlu Xuan* described earlier. Each brought a small amount of high quality tea to share, and listened as, between chatting about other things, their friends commented on the characteristics of the tea. For example, one man brought along some *Fenghuang Dancong* tea that came from a tree more than 60 years old. I asked one of those present – a now retired man who appeared to be regarded as the expert among experts when it came to judging tea – what he thought of it. He remarked that, while the tea had the rich flavour of tea from an older tree, the farmer who had produced it had not been able to maximise those benefits; the tea, though good, was not as good as it might have been.

I detected a note of friendly competitiveness in the ways in which teas were tabled, prepared, then drunk and evaluated. One man – a prominent entrepreneur, I was told – brought along what was probably the most prestigious tea on the occasion: a *Fenghuang Dancong* made from the leaves of a single, very old tree, the entire output of which at the last harvest was just seven *jin* (about 3.5 kg). Nobody, so far as I was aware, mentioned prices, but everyone present would have been well aware that this tea would have been worth thousands of *yuan*, probably thousands of dollars. Most of those present were men,

⁴⁸ For an interesting account of these efforts in Yunnan Province, with respect to Puer tea, see Zhang (94).

but two were women. Both of them grew their own tea on their own farms in the Fenghuang Mountains, and one of them also owned a business selling tea in Chaozhou. I was told by others present that this lady had a particularly high level of expertise.

Throughout the entire evening, the host quietly, courteously but very efficiently prepared each pot or *gaiwan* of tea for drinking, sitting behind an elegant table, using just five cups, which he rinsed in hot water with each new pouring, deftly ensuring that we all shared equally in the tea consumed. In all, we drank 10 or 11 kinds of tea over a few relaxing hours, before the guests dispersed. Reflecting later on the evening, what seemed to me to be its defining characteristics were, firstly, the informed attentiveness that was accorded every sip of tea from the small cups, and secondly, the relaxed ambience generated by friends chatting. These people were serious about their tea, but certainly not solemn.

6.5 Attentiveness to utensils (*chaju*)

One of the oldest and most widely recognized ways of defining the preparation and consumption of tea as an art rather than – or as well as - a routine part of everyday life is through the use of fine utensils. This is true of Chinese tea culture in general. Lu Yu devoted the second of the three main sections of *Cha Jing* to prescribing the proper wares to use in preparing and drinking tea, and each era since then has defined its own suitably elegant pots, bowls, cups, stoves, tables and other equipment for preparing and drinking tea. Chaoshan gongfu tea is no exception. Although none of the participants in this study came close to using all of the 18 items specified by Weng Huidong and listed in the previous chapter, some derived some of the pleasure of drinking gongfu tea from paying attention to the material objects associated with it. I have already referred to Mr Lu's elegant *chatai*, or tea table, ornately carved from a single camphor tree. Several participants paid particular attention to collecting and using fine teapots. Inevitably, this meant selecting one or more purple clay teapots made in Yixing, in Jiangsu province – the most famous site for producing both factory-made and hand-made teapots in China. While the latter can fetch several thousand yuan in price, a reasonable quality, hand-made Yixing purple clay teapot could be purchased, according to several participants, for ¥500 - ¥1,000. One of the non-Chaoshan born participants who has taken up gongfu tea as an acquired practice, has a collection of several hand-made Yixing teapots, several of them with certificates of authentication signed by the potter. Yixing pots are valued, among other reasons, for their ability to take on a smooth, burnished lustre – *baojiang* (包浆) on their external surface – provided that they are 'raised' properly.

Teapots made of the local red clay, I was told, do not have the same capacity to change over time, and the clay itself, according to one participant, is a little 'thin' (*taibao* 胎薄)

compared with Yixing purple clay. Nonetheless, all of the serious gongfu teapot collectors I met also purchased and used Chaozhou-made red clay teapots. One had several in his collection of over 70 teapots. Another kept both Yixing and Chaozhou pots in her office. She believes that, while the local clay is indeed not as good as Yixing clay, the quality of local workmanship is excellent. A hand-made local teapot (*shoula hu* 手拉壺), she said, could be purchased for as little as ¥200 - ¥300. (It could also, she added, fetch much more. She talked of one Chaozhou potter's teapot that had reportedly sold recently at an exhibition in Beijing for ¥88,000 (around \$AUD 17,000).

Some participants, as mentioned earlier, used a traditional earthenware stove (*nilu* 泥炉), clay kettle (*shadiao* 砂铫) and olive-shaped, charcoal pellets (*lanhetan* 榄核炭) to heat the water, while one, on preparing a fifth infusion of a particularly fine *Fenghuang Dancong* tea, produced a silver teapot, into which he poured the tea from the pot in which it had been brewed before serving it to his guests. The second, silver pot, he explained, helped to sweeten the taste of the tea. The fifth infusion, or *pao*, did indeed taste pleasantly sweet, though to what extent this was due to the use of a silver teapot I could hardly judge.

6.6 Incorporating philosophical aspects into gongfu tea

In the heart of Chaozhou, above an arch in the *Kou Chi* temple (叩齿古诗), which dates back to the Tang Dynasty, is a sign proclaiming: *Chan cha yi wei* - Zen and tea are of one flavour (Figure 6.7).



Figure 6-7: 'Chan cha yi wei': sign in a temple in Chaozhou

Historically, as I have described earlier, Chinese tea culture – particularly in its contemplative aspect – has deep roots in the great Chinese spiritual traditions of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism – especially in Buddhism. The phrase *Chan Cha Yi Wei* probably originated in Japan, but at some stage made its way back to China (14). Whether or not the association between gongfu tea and *Chan* Buddhism – or, for that matter, other forms of contemporary Buddhism – lives on in day-to-day practices in the *Kou Chi* temple, or other monastic sites in the Chaoshan region, I cannot say. I did not

extend my inquiries into the monastery; this is a limitation of the present study. My focus was on everyday life in the secular world.

As I reported in the previous chapter, participants in this study were generally sceptical of attempts to link Chaoshan gongfu tea with spirituality or religiosity, with one participant declaring ‘*Buyao tai shenhua le*’ – ‘Don’t spiritualize it’. One participant, however, described himself as a Buddhist. This does not mean that he was the only Buddhist among the sample. I did not make a point of asking people about their religious beliefs. This participant volunteered the information as part of his self-description. He is one of those described in Chapter Four as having been born and grown up outside Chaoshan, and taken up gongfu tea as an acquired practice. On the family shrine in the living room of his house stands a statue of Guanyin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, to whom he prays prior to drinking tea.

Another, Chaoshan-born participant stated that tea culture and Buddhism were not merely similar, but the same: *xiangtong* (相同). The essence of Buddhism, he asserted, is realization: *wu* (悟), while the teachings could be summed up in four words: *ku* (苦), *jing* (静), *fan* (凡), *fang* (放): *ku* meaning bitter, painful; this is the nature of life, that we must experience; *jing* meaning calm, tranquil, tranquility; the state we should seek to attain; *fan*, humility; we need to have a humble heart and do humble things; *fang* -letting go, putting down, release. Similarly, he continued, the flavor of tea is both bitter and sweet (*wei you ku, wei you gan* 味有苦, 味有甘); you must taste both. To taste the tea you also need a calm and humble heart.

Another participant, also from Chaoshan, spoke of a link between tea-drinking and energy (*nengliang* 能量). Drinking tea, he suggested, brought together three sources of energy: *tian* (天) – heaven, sky; *di* (地) or earth, and *ren* (人) – people. In growing, tea harnesses energy from the sky and earth, and is produced and consumed through the activities of people. Ideally, he continued, invoking a Daoist concept, it should be produced and consumed in such a way as to promote harmony among the three elements: *tian di ren he* (天地人和). The harmony – or absence of harmony – was a product both of the environment in which the tea was grown, and the energy generated by the people involved in its production and consumption.

Together, these examples suggest that, while Chaoshan gongfu tea as a contemporary practice is not strongly linked to spirituality – both its purpose and meaning to participants are primarily social rather than spiritual – some drinkers have nonetheless chosen to explore and perhaps attach significance to spiritual or philosophical aspects of their tea-

drinking practices. At this point, it is prudent to acknowledge another limitation in the study design: the members of the sample on which this study is based work in private industry or the civil service. None of them follow occupations with a traditional link to ‘literati’ or ‘intellectuals’, however we might define these terms. Perhaps, were I to expand my study sample to include a selection of more highly educated people, or scholars, or artists, I might unearth closer connections between gongfu tea-drinking in Chaoshan and spirituality, perhaps not. What we can say from the present study, I suggest, is that among Chaoshan gongfu tea drinkers who are not members of any kind of cultural elite, there is little evidence that drinkers interpret their tea-drinking experiences in spiritual terms.

6.7 The dimensions of refinement combined

Of the 27 participants in the study who regularly drank Chaoshan gongfu tea, either as an inherited or an acquired practice, around two-thirds (18 participants, or 66.7%) demonstrated attentiveness to at least one of the five dimensions discussed above. The proportion was similar among those who had taken up gongfu tea as an acquired practice (3 out of 5 participants) and those who had inherited the practice (15 out of 22 participants).

Table 6.2 summarises the dimensions along which the participants demonstrated attentiveness. As the Table shows, eight of the 18 participants who displayed at least one aspect of attentiveness did so with respect to two or more dimensions, while two did so with respect to all five dimensions.

Table 6-2: Prevalence of attentiveness to the five dimensions of gongfu tea art

ID	Inherited/ acquired	Demonstrated attentiveness to					
		Settings	Tea	Utensils	Time	Mental/spiritual aspects	Total
17	Acquired		√				1
5	Acquired	√	√	√			3
29	Acquired						0
30	Acquired						0
31	Acquired	√	√				2
16	Inherited		√				1
18	Inherited		√				1
19	Inherited		√				1
7	Inherited						0
8	Inherited						0
9	Inherited					√	1
10	Inherited						0
2	Inherited	√				√	2
3	Inherited		√	√			2
11	Inherited	√	√	√	√	√	5
22	Inherited		√				1
23	Inherited		√				1
4	Inherited						0
13	Inherited		√				1
12	Inherited						0
25	Inherited		√				1
27	Inherited						0
28	Inherited						0
26	Inherited			√			1
32	Inherited	√	√				2
24	Inherited	√	√	√	√		4
33	Inherited	√	√	√	√	√	5
Total		7	15	6	3	4	

The most common way of practicing attentiveness, as Table 6.2 shows, was with respect to the appreciation and selection of tea. Fifteen participants showed this form of attentiveness. The three remaining dimensions of attentiveness were much less prominent:

seven participants demonstrated attentiveness to settings, six to utensils, and four to the mental/spiritual dimensions of gongfu tea. Three participants devoted time to enhancing their enjoyment of gongfu tea.

6.8 Summary

Chaoshan gongfu tea, by its very nature, is a relatively refined set of activities, entailing attentiveness both in preparing tea and also in drinking it. Despite this, for many Chaoshan people it is not seen as a form of tea *art*, but rather as a routine part of everyday life – as *xiguan*. Some tea-drinkers, however, choose to cultivate their tea-drinking practices as tea art. This is accomplished, not by adhering to a set of prescriptive requirements for preparing and drinking gongfu tea, but rather by acquiring expertise in one or more of five dimensions of tea-drinking practices, namely settings, selecting tea, setting aside time for enhanced enjoyment of tea, tea utensils, and philosophical or spiritual aspects of tea culture. Tea drinkers differ from one another in how they choose to elevate their gongfu tea-related practices out of the commonplace, into the domain of tea art. Some people focus on settings, some on teapots, some on seeking out particularly fine tea. No doubt there are also other ways that this study has not uncovered. There is no single, formulaic Chaoshan gongfu tea art (as literary representations imply), but rather, a number of domains of practice in which people choose to cultivate knowledge, skills and creativity.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study began by asking about the place of Chaoshan gongfu tea in a society undergoing rapid changes, both culturally, with the growth of individualistic consumerism, and structurally, with increasing integration into a global economy. The study proceeded along two lines of inquiry: the first involved examining representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object in contemporary discourses; the second, a small exploratory field study of Chaoshan gongfu tea as practised in people's everyday lives. In concluding the study, I summarise what each of these lines of inquiry has to contribute to answering the question posed at the outset, and consider how the two domains – discourse and everyday practices - are related to each other.

7.1 Chaoshan gongfu tea as discourse

In Chapter Three, the emergence of a literary discourse is described, in which gongfu tea is portrayed as a 'living fossil' (*huohuashi*) embodying not merely an ancient local tradition, but the very 'essence' of Chinese tea culture, or *chadao*, in doing so providing us with a living example of a tradition dating back in an unbroken stream more than 1,000 years to the Tang Dynasty (CE 618 – 907) and the tea-drinking practices set out by Lu Yu in his *Classic of Tea (Cha Jing)* (54, 80). According to this account, the method of preparing and consuming tea described by Lu Yu, known as *jian chafa* or the boiling tea method, was in fact a prototype of modern gongfu tea, although it was not called by this name at the time (80). Notwithstanding the changes that have occurred since then in the ways in which tea is produced and brewed in China, the 'essence' of Chinese *chadao*, according to this account, has been transmitted through successive generations, and shifted geographically until, in our time, it flourishes in Chaoshan as gongfu tea.

I argue that this account of the origins of Chaoshan gongfu tea is not supported by historical evidence. As Huang (81) has shown, historical records suggest that gongfu tea originated in the mid-Qing dynasty – in the early 18th century – when tea producers in the Yiwu Mountain area of Fujian province first utilized techniques for controlling the fermentation of tea-leaves in a manner that enabled them to produce a broad range of semi-fermented teas known collectively as Oolong teas. These teas in turn gave rise to the characteristic style of preparing and drinking tea that eventually came to be called gongfu tea – that is, a very strong brew of Oolong tea prepared in small pots and served in small cups. Initially, the label 'gongfu' – connoting both a high level of skill and processes that are relatively time-consuming - appears to have been applied to the new technique for producing Oolong teas, in recognition of the greater complexity and skill entailed when compared with previous methods of making tea. Later, however, it came

to be applied to the distinctive *style* of tea that we now call ‘gongfu’ tea.

I argue, as do Kim and Zhang (83), that the assertion of an unbroken link between Lu Yu and contemporary Chaoshan gongfu tea is an example of an ‘invented tradition’ (47), that is, a cultural phenomenon involving practices and symbolic artefacts that are represented as being contemporary manifestations of an ancient tradition, but that are in fact of more recent origin. An invented tradition, in the sense in which that term was coined by Hobsbawm and Ranger, is not necessarily a fabrication, but rather an interpretation of contemporary practices that ascribes to them a degree of antiquity beyond that supported by historical evidence. In this instance, to describe the gongfu tea *huohuashi* thesis as an invented tradition is not to deny some elements of cultural continuity between Tang Dynasty tea culture and modern Chaoshan gongfu tea culture. Indeed, the cultural threads can probably be traced back even before the Tang era, though the evidence diminishes as one pushes further back in time. What it does deny is the claim that gongfu tea has inherited the ‘essence’ of Tang Dynasty tea culture in an unbroken line of succession.

The concept of an ‘essence’, I argue here, conflates three dimensions of tea-related practices which, although inter-connected, are not identical. These are, firstly, the botanical and pharmacological properties of the tea plant, which are relatively unchanging, and which set limits around what can and cannot be done in converting the tea plant to a beverage for consumption; secondly, the techniques and associated equipment and utensils used for manufacturing tea and brewing it for consumption, which are bound by the limits set by the first dimension, but which, within these limits, have varied over time and from place to place, and thirdly, the social contexts associated with drinking tea, and the culturally shaped meanings conveyed by drinking tea, which also vary from place to place and over time, independently of both the first and second dimensions.

The first set of factors is indeed common to tea produced during Tang Dynasty China and in Chaoshan today, and everywhere else that tea is grown. It constitutes, therefore, a thread linking tea produced everywhere, and distinguishing tea from, say, coffee or wine. The existence of this thread, however, does not imply continuity in either the technical aspects of tea production or the cultural contexts and meanings associated with drinking tea. Trajectories in both of these dimensions must be demonstrated from evidence rather than assumed.

The *huohuashi* thesis is a recent elaboration of a modern literary discourse representing gongfu tea as a cultural object, the origins of which can be traced to an essay written in 1957 by Weng Huidong, entitled *Chaozhou Classic of Tea – Gongfu Tea* (81). Weng was

the first to codify in detail the steps involved in preparing gongfu tea, together with the utensils used, and in doing so gave it what Huang describes as a scholarly ‘polish’ (*wenhua ren de runse*) that subsequent writers have reproduced and elaborated, often by quoting at length from Weng himself.

Today, as I show in Chapter 3, representations of Chaoshan gongfu have been incorporated into contemporary transnational ‘tea culture’ discourses fostered both by tea enthusiasts and by commercial interests, and depicted as a Chinese ‘tea ceremony’ to stand alongside the much better known Japanese tea ceremony. For example, in Brisbane, Australia, a café offers a ‘traditional Chinese tea ceremony’ modelled on Chaoshan gongfu tea, while a local Buddhist temple offers regular training sessions in what it calls ‘DIY Tea Ceremony’ for \$15 per table per session⁴⁹. The path taken by the transnational cultural flow, to use Appadurai’s term (48, 95) from Chaoshan to Brisbane is probably via Taiwan where, as Yu shows, a style of tea-drinking modelled on Chaoshan gongfu tea became the favoured vehicle for a refined tea culture that emerged in the 1970s (84).

7.2 The ethnographic field study: Chaoshan gongfu tea as everyday practice

Chapters 4 – 6 above report the findings of an exploratory ethnographic study of gongfu tea as a set of contemporary practices. Using a research strategy known as ‘theory-driven sociological ethnography’ (67) or ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (68), I generated a snowball sample of 32 individuals and one family, as described in Chapter Two. Of these, 22 individuals were born and grew up in Chaoshan, and as a result had inherited a cultural tradition of which gongfu tea was part. Another four individuals and the family unit came from outside Chaoshan and had adopted Chaoshan-style gongfu tea as a conscious choice. These 26 individuals and one family constitute the sample of gongfu tea drinkers that underpins this study. The other six individuals in the sample were either residents of adjoining Fujian Province, which has a related though not identical tea-drinking culture, or – in one case – a person who, though not a tea-drinker herself, served as a link to others who were gongfu tea-drinkers.

Chapter 4 explores the similarities and differences between Chaoshan gongfu tea as an inherited tradition and as an acquired practice. Among participants who had been born and grown up in Chaoshan, gongfu tea was not something they had consciously learned. It was simply part of the world into which they had been socialized - something ‘natural’ rather than a cultural artifice. It was an inherited rather than an acquired practice, and had

⁴⁹ www.chungtian.org.au/tea-ceremony/ (retrieved 16 November 2016).

maintained this status into participants' adult lives. Gongfu tea was said to be 'part of our everyday lives' (*'shenghuo de yi bu fen'*) or, as one participant put it, it had 'seeped into our bones' (*'zhe yijing shentou dao guzi limian le'*). Chaoshan people, several people told me, did not have to make time for drinking gongfu tea – even though, when compared objectively with other ways of preparing and drinking tea it is quite time-consuming – they just did it.

By comparison, among those who had adopted rather than inherited gongfu tea, becoming adept in preparing and serving gongfu tea was an act of personal choice, akin to taking up a hobby. This tiny sub-sample does not provide anything like an adequate number from which to generalise about the many different pathways by which people might come to acquire an interest and skills in Chaoshan-style gongfu tea. But that was not the purpose of the study, which was primarily focused on the place of gongfu tea in contemporary Chaoshan. The study does, however, point to some of the distinctive aspects of gongfu tea as an acquired, rather than inherited, practice. Several of the 'adopters' had been drawn to gongfu tea because of what they saw as its calming, contemplative connotations. Gongfu tea provided a counterbalance to the stresses of work and daily life. For none of the adopters, however, was gongfu tea integrated into their social worlds in the way that it was among the inheritors, largely because the former did not live in a world of other gongfu tea drinkers.

In Chaoshan itself, I found gongfu tea to be ubiquitous, and thoroughly integrated into people's day-to-day lives – spatially, temporally and socially. Every home, every office, shop and factory, seemed to have a tea table (*chaji*) and at least one gongfu tea set, which appeared to be set up for use rather than display. Gongfu tea sets were tucked away, for example, in the corners of shops cluttered with merchandise, ready to be brought out whenever a break in routine activities occurred. Temporally, gongfu tea was integrated into everyday life both through regular use, especially after evening meals, or at the end of a working day, and through opportunistic use, for example, whenever a lull occurred in customers entering a shop. Socially, gongfu tea in Chaoshan is a vehicle for affirming social connections – with family, friends, and associates. Sociability is built into the gongfu tea set itself, with its three – or sometimes more – small cups, and into the procedures for serving tea, for example, in the way in which the host, regardless of the formality or informality of the occasion, will take pains to ensure that each guest receives tea of the same strength and colour.

What also emerged consistently from both interviews and observations was a distinctive combination of two characteristics not always found together in other contexts: the first

– meticulous attention to detail, the attitude conveyed in the Chinese word *jiangjiu* (讲究); the second, the high degree of creativity displayed by gongfu tea hosts in deploying their skills and knowledge. Attention to detail does not, in the practice of Chaoshan gongfu tea, express itself in slavish adherence to pre-ordained procedures. Rather, in consuming an often personally selected, locally grown *Fenghuang Dancong* tea, host and guests alike take part in a creative act, one that is at once both refined (*ya*) and commonplace (*su*).

The foundation on which this distinctive mix rests is attentiveness and skill in preparing, serving and drinking gongfu tea. In Chapter 5 I show that, as an everyday practice, gongfu tea in Chaoshan today exhibits elements of both continuity and change. Some of the changes arise from the adoption of new utensils. For example, the earthenware stove, olive charcoal pellets, and clay pot known as a *shadiao* for heating water, all described by Weng Huidong in his 1957 essay as standard gongfu tea utensils, have largely been replaced by the electric kettle. Several processes which, in Weng Huidong's account, required separate bowls, are now accomplished on a tea boat or *chachuan* — a circular bowl usually made from glazed or unglazed ceramic, with a removable perforated lid through which surplus water or tea waste can drain into the bowl. The *chachuan* provides not only a multi-functional utensil ideal for rinsing the pot, heating the cups and pouring the tea, but also a natural focal point for the participants in a gongfu tea-drinking occasion. When not in use it can be stowed away in a corner or on a shelf, and portable versions allow the cups to be carried inside it. Since its invention in the 1960s in the ceramics town of Fengxi, close to Chaozhou, it has become almost as ubiquitous as the practice of drinking gongfu tea itself.

Some traditional practices are also changing. For example, prior to tea being poured, teacups are rinsed in hot water. Traditionally, this is accomplished by a delicate practice known as *tang bei gun bei*, or rolling the cups in boiling water, which begins with each cup being filled with hot water. The host then takes each cup in turn, turns it on its side, and immerses it in one of the other cups, all the while rotating the cup with a deft flicking action of the fingers intended to ensure that the entire cup is rinsed without the host scalding his fingers. In my observation, while shopkeepers and others enjoying a session of gongfu tea on the street often practiced *tang bei gun bei*, among the more highly educated participants in this study using one's fingers was considered unhygienic (even with boiling water), and had been replaced by the use of wooden tongs for swishing the cups in hot water and tipping out the water.

Other traditional practices continue to be observed. For example, in pouring the tea

Chaoshan gongfu tea hosts, in my observation, meticulously follow practices expressed through two well-known metaphors. The first is *Guangong xun cheng* – Guan Gong patrols the city - a reference to a culture hero from the Three Kingdoms period to connote the practice of ensuring that the tea is distributed evenly to all participants. The second metaphor is *Han Xin dian bing* which means ‘Han Xin counts the troops’ and describes the process of distributing each and every last drop of tea evenly among the participants’ cups. These and other practices entailed in contemporary gongfu tea continue to lend a distinctive touch of elegance and refinement to tea-drinking occasions in Chaoshan. Yet they are all part of gongfu tea as everyday practice - as *xiguan* - rather than tea *art*.

7.3 Gongfu tea as art

Some regular drinkers of Chaoshan gongfu tea, however – drawn from both inheritors and adopters - have chosen to practice gongfu tea as a form of tea art, or *chayi*. In Chapter 6 I describe how this is accomplished. Again, and contrary to what is implied in literary accounts, it does not entail step-by-step adherence to a predefined model, but rather the acquisition of high-level knowledge and skills in the various procedures that make up a gongfu tea drinking occasion, and high quality equipment and utensils. Among participants in this study, those who had taken this extra step did so by devoting attentiveness to one or more of five dimensions of gongfu tea, namely (1) creating a distinctive setting for drinking gongfu tea; (2) developing expert knowledge about tea and purchasing high quality teas; (3) setting aside time for an enhanced enjoyment of gongfu tea; (4) becoming knowledgeable about, and utilizing, high quality tea utensils, such as teapots and cups, and (5) incorporating philosophical and/or spiritual aspects of Chinese tea culture into the practice of gongfu tea.

Individuals differed in where they chose to develop their knowledge or skills: one might collect fine teapots, while another might pay little attention to teapots but go to great lengths to seek out the finest teas. Conceptually, each of these dimensions can be viewed as a continuum from low to high attentiveness, along which each individual’s practice can be placed with respect to that dimension. An individual’s gongfu tea drinking practice can thus be represented as their position on each of these dimensions. It follows that there is no single formula for defining what constitutes gongfu tea *art*.

Among the 27 participants in the study who regularly drank Chaoshan gongfu tea, either as an inherited or an acquired practice, 18 participants (66.7%) cultivated attentiveness to at least one of these five dimensions discussed above, while eight participants did so in two or more dimensions. Two participants demonstrated attentiveness and expertise in all five dimensions. ‘Adopters’ of gongfu were as likely as ‘inheritors’ to cultivate

knowledge and practices with respect to one or more of these ‘tea art’ dimensions. The most widely practiced form of attentiveness was with respect to the appreciation and selection of tea, in which 15 participants had cultivated knowledge and skills.

7.4 Chaoshan gongfu tea as literary discourse and everyday practice: exploring the connections

How, then, are we to understand the relationship between Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural phenomenon represented in contemporary literary and other discourses, and as everyday practice in Chaoshan? The analysis undertaken in this thesis and summarized in this chapter suggests that the relationship is not as close as literary accounts imply. That is to say, discourse and everyday practice influence each other, but they certainly do not mirror each other. Neither one is a representation of the other. Each, rather, is a product of its own distinctive set of social agents, purposes, and processes. The creation of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object through multiple discourses is the outcome of activities undertaken by a number of agents, including academics, entrepreneurs and bloggers, all of them pursuing their own objectives, and drawing upon a variety of resources, tangible and intangible. As a cultural object framed by contemporary discourse, Chaoshan gongfu tea symbolizes and celebrates not only a distinctive regional identity, but also, at least in some accounts, an authentic, traditional *Chinese* ‘tea ceremony’, of even greater antiquity than the better known Japanese *chanoyu*.

These processes and institutional complexes are worlds away from the social and cultural factors shaping everyday practices among today’s drinkers of gongfu tea, regardless of whether or not they are located in Chaoshan. As we have seen in this study, drinking gongfu tea in Chaoshan itself is above all else a social activity – a way not merely of affirming, but of actively creating and sustaining the social worlds of which people are part. For those who have adopted Chaoshan gongfu tea as a conscious choice, it is a more personal matter. In either case, decisions about how, when and where to drink gongfu tea are shaped in part by culturally transmitted understandings and meanings, and in part by the opportunities and constraints thrown up by an ever-changing world; changes, subtle or obvious, in life's tempo; in places and times where a session of gongfu tea is or is no longer an option; in the marginal costs of allocating time, space, money to gongfu tea in preference to other options. In this mix of opportunities and constraints that presents itself each day to tea-drinkers, their families and friends, contemporary gongfu tea discourses are likely to play little or no part.

In the same way, whatever happens in the future will be shaped by the workings of constraints and opportunities shaping people’s everyday lives. In principle, it is possible

to foresee at least five possibilities, not all of them mutually exclusive. Firstly, Chaoshan gongfu tea may remain unchanged, both as a set of practices, and in its place in people's everyday lives. Secondly, it may become marginalized as some sort of cultural relic of a bygone age, along the lines foreshadowed by the critics of contemporary tea culture whose remarks I quoted at the beginning of this study. Thirdly, it may become more thoroughly commoditized – another drink, perhaps marketed as a slightly exotic drink, in the ever-evolving marketplace of beverages. Fourthly, it may be taken up more actively as a form of cultural consumption – for example, by businessmen and women for use in discussions with clients – and lose its connection with everyday life in Chaoshan in the process. Finally, it may adapt to changing circumstances and survive as an integral part of people's everyday lives in Chaoshan, different no doubt to what it was yesterday, but nonetheless retaining what I described above as its capacity to bring refinement into everyday life, and the everyday world into the realm of the refined.

This study does not pretend to foretell the future, but it does offer some pointers. The first possibility cited above – no change – can be dismissed. The evidence from this study suggests that Chaoshan gongfu tea as everyday practice has changed when compared with a few decades ago, and is continuing to change. There is no evidence to suggest that these processes will suddenly stop. The same change processes suggest that the second possible outcome – marginalization through ossification – is unlikely. The evidence from this study, I would argue, indicates that, among Chaoshan people at least, gongfu tea continues to enrich people's everyday lives in a way that many people value. As long as it meets people's needs, it is likely to survive. This does not, however, preclude the third possibility foreshadowed above: growing commoditization. The search for markets in a consumer-oriented society is relentless, and economic development creates ongoing opportunities for new styles of consumption. The Lu Yu tea-house in Shantou, described in section 6.2 above, is an example of a more commoditized form of gongfu tea consumption that may appeal to today's affluent younger generation. At the same time, this study has demonstrated the presence of a strong local culture of tea-drinking that can be expected to resist commoditization. As Kopytoff argues, resistance to commoditization occurs where an object or practice has values and meanings that cannot be reduced to monetary value in a market (42); there is little doubt that this is true of gongfu tea in Chaoshan today.

The fourth possibility – that gongfu tea develops as a form of cultural consumption in which the association with Chaoshan as a locality is weakened or even disappears – is something that warrants further consideration. As this study has shown, gongfu tea modelled on Chaoshan practices has already been taken up and promoted outside China

as an authentic ‘Chinese tea ceremony’. Anecdotal accounts – not followed up in this study – also suggest that many business-people in China who have no connections with Chaoshan have adopted gongfu tea as a way of creating a setting for discussions with clients and associates. Chaoshan gongfu tea, in other words, appears to be ripe for appropriation in a world of globalized cultural consumption. Whether this continues to develop, and whether or not, if it does, it results in a loss of the association with Chaoshan as a region, are questions that warrant ongoing research.

The fifth possibility foreshadowed above is continuing adaptation and survival. Perhaps the world of tomorrow will be in too much of a hurry to slow down for Chaoshan gongfu tea. Or perhaps, as Zeng and Ye optimistically argue, that very tempo will make people more aware of the importance of having regular time not constrained by schedules and demands (90). As this study has shown, gongfu tea remains deeply rooted in the regional culture of Chaoshan. From my standpoint as an interested outside observer, it is hard to imagine the people of Chaoshan abandoning the pleasures of slowing down to taste the tea – *manmande qu pincha* – in the foreseeable future.

Finally, in concluding this study, it is useful to acknowledge important questions that remain unanswered. The study has shown that a distinctive style of tea-drinking associated with a small, tucked away region in southeastern China has come to be represented as embodying the ‘essence’ of ancient Chinese tea culture and, internationally, as a ‘traditional Chinese tea ceremony’. Through what processes have these transformations occurred? Who and what are the agencies involved, and whose interests – including political and commercial interests – are being promoted through them? Although I identify what a number of writers agree is the origin of contemporary representations of Chaoshan gongfu tea as a cultural object – namely, Weng Huidong’s 1957 essay entitled *Chaozhou Chajing – Gongfu Cha* (86) – I have not attempted to answer these questions. To do so, I believe, would have demanded a much larger project and, in important respects, a different one, in which the creation of discourses, rather than the structures, actions and meanings attached to Chaoshan gongfu tea as everyday practice, would have become the focus of research.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study will, I hope, be of value in its own right as well as a prelude to addressing these larger questions. As a number of observers cited earlier in the study point out, in order to understand the place of Chaoshan gongfu tea (and, for that matter, other local tea cultures) in China today, we need to shift our attention from literary representations to people’s everyday practices. This I have attempted to do.

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9. APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORMS



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INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: Contemporary Chinese Tea Culture: custom, tradition and innovation in Gongfu tea

I wish to invite you to participate in my research on the above topic. The details of the study follow and I hope you will consider being involved. I am conducting this research for my Master of Arts at the University of New England, Australia. My principal supervisor is Dr Cuncun Wu of University of New England. Dr Wu can be contacted by email at cwu2@une.edu.au or by phone on **61-2-6773 3580**.

Aim of the Study:

As you know, Chaozhou gongfu tea is one of the oldest forms of tea culture in China, and is therefore an important part of the rich heritage of Chinese tea culture.

I am conducting a study of Chaozhou gongfu tea in China today, in order to understand how this ancient tradition has been adapted to modern day-to-day life. The study involves looking at gongfu tea both in Chaozhou itself and in other parts of China where people who did not grow up with gongfu tea have nevertheless taken up the practice.

I'm asking you to take part in the study because you practise gongfu tea. I hope to be able to talk with you about your gongfu tea, and perhaps share a drink of tea with you. I'm also interested in how gongfu tea fits in with your other activities, and why you enjoy it.

Interviews:

If you agree, I would like to record an interview with you, but without recording your name or any other identifying details. If you would rather I did not record the interview, please say so, and I will take notes instead. The interview will last from 30 to 45

minutes. Following the interview, a complete electronic copy will be provided to you if you would like one.

In writing up the interview, I would not use any identifiable quotations.

Photographs:

I may also want to take some photographs of people, including yourself, engaging in gongfu tea. Again, if you would rather not be photographed, please say so. No identifying information would be used in any research photographs.

Research Process:

Interviews for this project are expected to be completed by the end of 2010. The research will be used for a thesis for my Masters degree, and may also be presented at conferences or written up in journals - without any identifying information about participants.

Data storage

All fieldwork material – including interview recordings and field notes – will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my office. Recordings, and any transcripts made from them, will be stored for five(5) years following submission of the thesis and then destroyed.

Safeguards

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the project at any time and there will be no disadvantage if you decide to do so.

The project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (approval no. XXXXXX). It is highly unlikely that it will raise any problems, but if you have any complaints about the way in which the research is conducted, you may contact my principal supervisor Dr Cuncun Wu (contact details above). Alternatively, you can contact the University Research Ethics Office at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

If you would rather make any concerns known to an independent person in China itself, you may contact **Dr Gan Xingfa** on 021 52856523 or ganxingfa@hotmail.com. Dr Gan is the former Deputy Director of the Shanghai Health Education Institute, and he would be prepared to relay any concerns to the University of New England.

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you.

Regards

Dr Peter d'Abbs



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致参与者的信息

研究课题：现代中国茶文化：工夫茶的习惯、传统与创新

很希望能邀请您参与以上课题研究。我将在下文介绍该研究的详细信息，以便您在参加之前对该研究有充分的了解。此研究也将成为我在澳大利亚新英格兰大学的硕士研究课题。我的导师新英格兰大学吴存存博士的联系方式如下：电邮：cwu2@une.edu.au，电话：61-2-6773 3580。

研究目的：

众所周知，潮州工夫茶文化是中国茶文化中最古老的型种遗存，因而可以说是中国茶文化丰富遗产的重要组成部份。

此次我在中国进行的潮州工夫茶研究，是希望了解这一古老传统习俗在现今生活中的应用。所以我在进入潮汕地区研究的同时也会走访潮汕地区以外的城市，寻找不是出生于工夫茶世家但却爱上工夫茶的人士。

我很希望能邀请您参加我的研究，分享工夫茶心得，并共同品茶。也同时希望分享您将工夫茶融入生活各方各面的心得。

访问：

如您同意，我会将此次访问录音，但不会录下您的姓名及任何个人资料。如您不同意，我可改为笔录。访问全程仅需 30—45 分钟。如访问后您有需要，可获得此次访问录音的电子版。

有关此次访问的所有文字资料都不会透露任何个人信息。

照片

我或许会与您或与工夫茶有关的朋友拍照留影，用作留念或研究的一部份。如您不同意，请随时告诉我。同样地，所有照片将不会透露个人信息。

研究过程:

该课题研究将在 2010 年底完成。研究结果将成为我的硕士研究论文，也有可能 在学术会议或杂志上发表 — 同样不会涉及任何参加者的个人信息。

资料储存:

有关该研究的所有资料 — 包括该次访问的录音和笔录资料 — 都将锁在我公司的资料库中保 密，在课题完成后保存 5 年，然后销毁。

隐私维护

参与此研究的个人全属自愿，可随时中止或退出。

该研究得到新英格兰大学人文研究处道德规范委员会通过，对个人不会造成任何困扰或 不便。但如对该研究方式有异议，可联系 **Cuncun Wu** 博士讨论（联系方式如上）。也 可与新英格兰大学研究处道德规范办公室联络。地址如下：

地址: Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449
电话: (02) 6773 3449
Facsimile: (02) 6773 3543
传真: (02) 6773 3543
Email: ethics@une.edu.au
电邮: ethics@une.edu.au

也可与身在中国的联系人甘兴发博士联络：电话：021 52856523 或电邮：gaxingfa@hotmail.com。甘博士曾任上海卫生教育学院副院长，可解答与新英格兰大学有 关的疑问。

感谢您的参与，很希望与您保持联系，成为朋友。

祝好！

Dr Peter d'Abbs

彼得·戴波斯博士



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Consent Form for Participants

Research Project: Contemporary Chinese Tea Culture: custom, tradition and innovation in Gongfu tea

I,, have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

Yes/No

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time. Yes/No

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published so long as no identifying information is published. Yes/No

I agree to the interview being recorded using a digital record and transcribed.

Yes/No

I agree to participate in photographs in connection with Gongfu tea, provided that I cannot be identified in any way (unless I give express consent to be identified in photographs)

Yes/No

.....
Participant Date

.....
Researcher Date



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参与者同意函

研究课题：中国当代茶文化：工夫茶的习惯、传统与创新

我：.....已阅读“致参与者信息”，并将接受访问，分享真实感受，协助此次研究。

是/否

我同意参与此项研究并知晓我能随时中止退出。

是/否

我同意研究资料在日后发表，但不透露个人资料。

是/否

我同意将此次访问录音并转录。

是/否

我同意将本人有关工夫茶的照片用于该研究，并不透露个人信息（除非本人明确同意，才透露个人信息）

参与者

日期

研究员

日期

10. APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS



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RESEARCH PROJECT

Contemporary Chinese tea culture: custom, tradition and innovation in Gongfu tea

Draft interview topic guide

As the interview is a semi-structured one, in which participants will be invited to reflect on their experiences rather than simply answer a list of pre-arranged questions, this schedule should be regarded as a guide – a set of topics to be covered – rather than a sequential questionnaire. The objective in using these questions is to stimulate a ‘guided conversation’, in which other questions will arise (or some of these will be re-phrased) in response to the participant’s own statements.

1. Gongfu tea is a more complicated way of preparing and drinking tea than simply throwing some tea into a pot and pouring on hot water. So perhaps we can begin by your telling me why it is that you go to the extra trouble of making (or drinking, or both) Gongfu tea.
2. Have you always drunk tea in this way, or is it something that you’ve consciously picked up?

(Probe: if always drunk, ask about parents’ tea drinking;
if something picked up, ask about when, where, why.)

3. If I were to say ‘what is the most important feature that distinguishes Gongfu tea from other ways of drinking’, what would you say?

(Probe for additional important features.)

4. Do you have Gongfu tea whenever you drink tea, or is it something you keep for special occasions?

(Probe: if ‘special occasions’ – what, why?)

5. Is Gongfu tea mainly a social activity for you – something you do with friends, family or colleagues – or is it something you’re just as likely to do on your own?

(Probe: ask for reasons.)

6. Most of us drink tea, coffee or whatever partly because of the taste, and partly because there's something we like about the way we *feel* when we sit down for a drink. Can you tell me how drinking (and/or preparing) Gongfu tea makes you feel?
7. Now I have a few questions about the Gongfu tea process. First of all, how important is the quality of the *tea* in Gongfu tea?

(Probe: kinds of tea mentioned. Why are they particularly well suited? Are there teas that you would NOT use for Gongfu tea? Why?)

8. What about the equipment – the teapots and so on; how important are they?

(Probe: elaborate on any items/kinds of equipment mentioned)

9. How important is the setting in Gongfu tea, such as the room, the furniture and the décor?

(Probe: elaborate on any items mentioned.)

10. Finally, how important are the actual procedures used in preparing and serving Gongfu tea?

(Probe: elaborate on any items mentioned.)

11. In the last few years there have been many changes in China. How do you see Gongfu tea being affected by these changes?

12. That's all of my questions, thank you very much. Before we close, could I ask you just a few personal details:

12a. Firstly, do you mind telling me which of the following age groups you belong to:

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61+

12b. How long have you lived in?

12c. (If applicable) What is your occupation?

12d. And finally, do you mind telling me the highest level of education you reached?

ENDS