

## **A Record of the Tea Retreat: The *Chaliao ji* by Lu Shusheng**

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### **Abstract**

The *Chaliao ji* 茶寮記 (A Record of the Tea Retreat) by the scholar-official Lu Shusheng 陸樹聲 (1509–1605) stands out in the vast corpus of essays on tea produced in the late Ming dynasty for two reasons. Firstly, the social status of its author, who held the highest official position among all tea writers of the period, shows that tea appreciation was actively discussed among the highest echelons of the late Ming gentry. Secondly, the *Chaliao ji* is the earliest publication to bring together the issues of the construction of a private tea room, prescriptions for the preparation of loose-leaf tea, as well as instructions for savouring the beverage, thus further delineating specific aspects of literati tea culture as social markers.

This study examines the background and content of *Chaliao ji*. It first provides an overview of Lu Shusheng's biography, from his experience in officialdom to his later life in retirement, focusing on his construction of a garden and his commitment to Buddhism and tea appreciation. It then discusses the contents of the text, the several extant editions and issues regarding its authorship. Finally, it provides an English translation of the *Chaliao ji* accompanied by the Chinese text and commentary.

### **Keywords**

Chinese tea culture – Chinese gardens – Ming Buddhism – Tea literature – Chinese literati

## Introduction

The Kindling Gatherer of the Nine Mountains has no name, lives among the Nine Mountains, and wanders without avoiding the city. He used to serve in officialdom, but grew weary of it and resigned ... Sometimes he takes a small carriage, dresses in rustic garb, fetches a deer tail fly-whisk, picks out some books, and goes to the outskirts of town, followed by one or two servants. He visits Buddhist monasteries, dawdling there and forgetting to leave. He casually sits in front of old mountain people, rustic elders, hermits and Chan masters to discuss transcendent matters or talk about seasonal plantings, gathering firewood, clothes and food. By nature, he is fond of tea, and has written the *Criteria for Tea* divided into seven points. Wherever he goes, he takes his tea stove, collects fallen firewood, draws water and prepares tea, and when he meets with literary friends, he entertains himself with poetry and writing.<sup>1</sup>

This autobiographical account succinctly sums up the career of the late Ming scholar-official Lu Shusheng 陸樹聲 (1509–1605), touching upon his service in the imperial administration before his retirement from officialdom, idyllically depicting himself as a recluse scholar devoted to literature and religion, and stating his great passion for tea, which eventually culminated in the compilation of an essay dedicated to this beverage.

In the following pages, I will first present in greater detail the life and work of Lu Shusheng, to the extent relevant for our understanding of the contents of his *Chaliao ji* 茶寮記 (A Record of the Tea Retreat) and the context in which it was composed. Then, I will examine the different editions of the *Chaliao ji* and discuss some issues regarding its authorship. Finally, I will offer a complete translation and a commentary to the text.

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<sup>1</sup> *Jiushan sanqiao zhuan* 九山散樵傳 (Biography of the Kindling Gatherer from the Nine Mountains), in *Yiyuan zazhu*, 11a–13a. Chinese text: “九山散樵者，不著姓字，家九山中，出入不避城市。樵嘗仕內，已倦遊謝去 ... 時或命小車，御野服，執麈尾，挾冊，從一二蒼頭，出遊近郊，入佛廬精捨，徘徊忘去。對山翁野老，隱流禪侶，班荆偶坐，談塵外事，商略四時樹藝樵採服食之故。性嗜茶，著《茶類》七條，所至攜茶灶，拾墮薪，汲泉煮茗，與文友相過從，以詩筆自娛。” A slightly different translation is found in Benn 2015: 184.

## Lu Shusheng

### *Background, Early Years and Official Career*

Lu Shusheng was a native of Huating 華亭 (present Songjiang, Jiangsu), his courtesy name (*zi*) was Yuji 與吉 and his sobriquet (*hao*) was Pingquan 平泉.<sup>2</sup> He was born into a peasant family with the surname Lin 林, which his paternal grandfather had adopted in a matrilocal marriage, abandoning the original surname of Lu 陸.<sup>3</sup> He was brought up working as a farmhand, but, during breaks from his work in the fields, he seized every opportunity to study and educate himself.<sup>4</sup> In 1541, he won first place in the capital examination, was immediately admitted as a Bachelor into the imperial Hanlin Academy, and was subsequently appointed Junior History Compiler.<sup>5</sup> After his success in the imperial examination, he and his whole family resumed the patrilineal surname of Lu. In 1552, he was forced to take leave to mourn his father's death. After the mourning period, he was appointed Director of Studies of the Imperial University in Nanjing, but he asked to retire soon after. In the following years, Lu served for short periods in Nanjing as Chief Minister of Court of Imperial Sacrifices and Head of the Imperial University. He received many other senior official appointments at the capital and in Nanjing, most of which he declined or resigned from due to illness.<sup>6</sup>

Thanks to his unwavering moral integrity and his resolve to renounce prestigious positions, Lu Shusheng earned a great reputation and respect within and outside the imperial palace. In 1572, the newly enthroned Emperor Wanli 萬曆 (r. 1572–1620) summoned Lu and appointed him Minister of Rites. However, due to the hostility from the palace eunuchs, Lu felt uncomfortable in this position and presented memorials asking to resign. In the winter of 1572,

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<sup>2</sup> Biography in Chang Bide 1965: 571. Besides his own works, the main sources about the life of Lu Shusheng are the biography in the Official History of the Ming (in *Mingshi*, 216: 2b–3b), the *Lu Wending gong zhuan* 陸文定公傳 (Biography of the honourable Lu Wending) by Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639) (in *Chen Meigong ji*, 30: 11b–16b), and the *Zizheng Dafu Taizi Shaobao Libu Shangshu jian Hanlinyuan Xueshi zeng Taizi Taibao shi Wending Pingquan xiansheng Lu gong Shusheng muzhiming* 資政大夫太子少保禮部尚書兼翰林院學士贈太子太保諡文定平泉先生陸公樹聲墓誌銘 (Obituary of the honourable Lu Shusheng, Master Pingquan, posthumously called Wending, Grand Master for Assisting toward Good Governance, Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent, Minister of Rites, Chancellor of the Hanlin Academy, and Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent) by Yu Shenxing 于慎行 (1545–1608) (in *Gucheng shanguan wenji*, 22: 1a–10b).

<sup>3</sup> *Gucheng shanguan wenji*, 22: 1a–b.

<sup>4</sup> *Mingshi*, 216: 2a.

<sup>5</sup> The English translation of official titles is based on Hucker 1985 and Zhang et al. 2017.

<sup>6</sup> *Mingshi*, 216: 2a.

he was finally relieved of his duties and returned home. Although Lu Shusheng was accredited as a palace official for more than sixty years, he actually served less than twelve.<sup>7</sup>

### *Life in Retirement*

Lu Shusheng's renunciation of a promising career at court was not an exceptional case in his time. From the second quarter of the sixteenth century, an increasing number of officials voluntarily resigned from their posts on the pretext of illness and returned home. This phenomenon, which could be partly attributed to the souring of court life and the general political situation, indicates a shift in the gentry's attitude towards the administrative career. Withdrawal from office became a common and celebrated practice of the literary elite, whose social engagement and cultural interests became progressively divorced from the state-centred vision of gentry life.

For Lu Shusheng, like many other scholar-officials of the late Ming, withdrawal did not mean a definitive disengagement from the public sphere. In his hometown of Huating, Lu engaged in hands-on gentry activism and soon became involved in local projects, like the refurbishing of the local Confucian school and several government buildings. In retirement, he compiled the *Xianghui gongyue* 鄉會公約 (Public Compact for Communal Gatherings, ca 1589) to encourage his fellow villagers to return to more frugal customs in social life, and the *Lushi jiaxun* 陸氏家訓 (Admonitions for the Lu Family), which contains instructions for the moral education and conduct of his descendants.<sup>8</sup> Both works demonstrate his adherence to Confucian principles and allegiance to the role of the local gentry in promoting such orthodox values in society. He was highly respected and esteemed by his fellow villagers, who hung his portrait and offered incense and prayers for him at temples on his birthday.<sup>9</sup>

For the very high positions he reached and declined in his career as an official, Lu was praised by his peers as a model of the rightful and unbending Confucian scholar, who, being jaded by political life, preferred to live in seclusion. He was very active in social networking, as shown by the rich exchange of prefaces and various commemorative writings with other prominent literary figures. Among his friends and acquaintances there were the famous artist and essayists Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636) and the fellow townsman Chen Jiru 陳繼儒

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<sup>7</sup> *Mingshi*, 216: 3b.

<sup>8</sup> The texts were published in 1616 within *Lu Wendong gong ji*. See *Lu Wendong gong ji*, 22 and 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Chen Meigong ji*, 30: 14b.

(1558–1639).<sup>10</sup> Chen wrote a biography of Lu Shusheng, which extolls his moral character and fearlessness, and describes his tall stature and admirable bearing in his old age.<sup>11</sup>

Despite his lamented poor health, Lu Shusheng had remarkable longevity and lived to the age of ninety-seven. When he died, more than 10,000 people attended his funeral.<sup>12</sup> Lu was posthumously appointed Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent and given the honorary title Wending 文定.

Lu Shusheng was quite a prolific writer and produced a substantial body of work, including numerous poems, prefaces, biographies and epitaphs, commemorative writings, essays on literary, philosophical, and moral subjects, as well as many informal notes and short essays (*xiaopin* 小品). Most of the latter were written after his withdrawal from the civil service and express his feelings and his cheerful appreciation of life's little pleasures.<sup>13</sup> In 1616, Lu's descendants compiled and published a complete collection of his writings in 26 *juan* under the title *Lu Wending gong ji* 陸文定公集 (Collected Works of the Honourable Lu Wending).

### ***Lu Shusheng's Garden***

During a sick leave in his forties, Lu Shusheng bought a small plot of land in his home town and in 1556 started the construction of a garden:

I obtained an abandoned piece of land situated a hundred paces walking south outside the city wall. I cleared it of weeds and made a pond in its lower part. I built a pavilion on the pond and arranged decorative rocks in front of it. To the left of the pavilion, I made a tower, which opens on all sides and allows for a view of the distant landscape, and between I planted bamboo and trees. I decorated the hall as it was in the past, to receive guests. In the room next to it, I made a tea retreat.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For Dong Qichang's biography, see Chang Bide 1965: 735, and Cahill 1982: 87–91. For Chen Jiru, see the exhaustive study in Greenbaum 2007.

<sup>11</sup> *Chen Meigong ji*, 30: 13a–b.

<sup>12</sup> *Chen Meigong ji*, 30: 14b.

<sup>13</sup> A few short essays by Lu have been translated into English and included in Ye 1999: 11–17.

<sup>14</sup> *Shiyuan ji*, in *Yiyuan zazhu*: 1a–b. Chinese text: “循城之址，稍南百步，得棄地焉。疏扶叢穢，就其下者為池。亭於池之上，累石以當其前。亭之左，折為樓。樓四達以望遠，樹竹木其間。飾堂之舊者，以待賓客。屋於其旁者，為茶寮。”

Lu named the place Shiyuan 適園 ‘Suitable Garden’, from which he took the sobriquets Shiyuan buke 適園逋客 ‘Recluse of the Suitable Garden’.<sup>15</sup> Lu stayed in his garden whenever he had free time from duties during his intermittent official career and after his definitive retirement. However, in his eighties he regretfully noted that over the thirty years he owned the garden, the time he could actually enjoy living there amounted to just one year out of ten.<sup>16</sup>

The creation of private residential gardens became one of the main activities of the southern gentry in the course of the sixteenth century. Craig Clunas has pointed out how this phenomenon represents a major shift in the very concept of a ‘garden’ and is consistent with the evolution of the cultural and political context of this period. Gardens were “spaces of social competition, as fully involved in the search for status and power. Far from being an unseen refuge, a garden was a way of proclaiming its owner’s wealth and taste to a wide audience.”<sup>17</sup>

Possessing a garden, ostentatiously living in it as a recluse, restricting its access to peers and selected visitors, and publicly representing all this in writing, became part of the repertoire of social distinction strategies deployed by the late Ming literary elite.

Lu Shusheng also celebrated and promoted his garden with the composition of two short essays: the *Shiyuan ji* 適園記 (A Record of the Suitable Garden) and the *Shiyuan buke ji* 適園逋客記 (A Record of the Recluse of the Suitable Garden).<sup>18</sup> These two works, together with his autobiography, the *Chaliao ji*, and ten other writings about the leisure time he spent in the garden alone or with his guests, were eventually grouped together under the title *Yiyuan zazhu* 適園雜著 (Miscellaneous Writings from the Suitable Garden), and published within his collected works in 1616.

### ***Commitment to Buddhism***

Another important trend that characterises the cultural life of the southern literary elite during the sixteenth century is an increased interest in Buddhism and associating with its clergy. Neo-Confucian thinkers freely absorbed Buddhist elements into their speculations and writings, following the path set

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<sup>15</sup> As observed by Wai-Yee Li, in the naming and description of his garden, Lu played with the polysemy of the word *shi* 適, which can be interpreted as chance, ease, comfort, suitability, or being in place; see Li 2012: 315.

<sup>16</sup> *Shiyuan buke ji*, in *Yiyuan zazhu*: 10b–11a.

<sup>17</sup> Clunas 1996: 96.

<sup>18</sup> Craig Clunas interprets the title of the *Shiyuan buke ji* as “A Record of Avoiding Guests in the Apt Garden”, speculating that in Lu’s garden “guests are never admitted”; see Clunas 1996: 95–96.

by the philosopher Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) and his school.<sup>19</sup> From the middle of the century, scholars increasingly turned to monasteries and monks in search of Buddhist wisdom. This trend reached its climax with the theorist Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), who eloquently embraced Chan Buddhism and in 1588 took the tonsure and started dressing as a Buddhist monk.<sup>20</sup>

Late Ming Confucian scholars were enthused by the study of Buddhist texts, mantra recitation and meditation. While religious and spiritual activities were personally practiced as forms of self-cultivation, they were not just a private matter; rather, such endeavours were ostentatiously represented as part of the public image of the retired scholar. Timothy Brook argues that the embrace of Buddhism in the late Ming was strictly tied to the idealisation of withdrawal and offered an alternative way for gentry society to redetermine elite status in cultural terms.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Brook also states that engaging in monastic patronage and charitable activities constituted a public arena for the gentry (particularly in the Jiangnan area) to organise autonomously and express their local dominance and independence from the state.<sup>22</sup> In all these pursuits, adherence to Buddhism became a distinctive trait of southern gentry social and cultural identity.

Although an unyielding proponent of Confucian principles, Lu Shusheng was also personally and publicly committed to Buddhism. He had regular contact with eminent Buddhist clergy and took part in public lectures on the sutras. He also wrote the essay *Chanlin yuzao* 禪林餘藻 (Desultory Appraisals of Chan Monasteries) and a subsequent supplement to it.<sup>23</sup> Lu further expressed his adherence to Buddhism in two style names he adopted. One is Wuzheng Jushi 無諍居士 ‘Buddhist Layman Without Strife’. The other – which he used in his autobiography – is Jiushan Sanqiao 九山散樵 ‘Kindling Gatherer of the Nine Mountains’, from the name of the nine *cakravāla*, the concentric mountain ranges of Buddhist cosmology that encompasses the whole world and have Mount Sumeru at their centre.

### ***Lu Shusheng as a Tea Enthusiast***

Besides philosophical speculation and devotional practices, another important activity in the late Ming that regularly brought gentry and clergy together was

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<sup>19</sup> The accommodation of Buddhism into Neo-Confucianism in the late Ming dynasty is discussed in Brook 1993: 54–88.

<sup>20</sup> Biography in Goodrich and Fang, 1976: 807–18.

<sup>21</sup> Brook 1993: 316.

<sup>22</sup> Brook 1993: 320.

<sup>23</sup> *Xu Chanlin yuzao* 續禪林餘藻 (Continuation of the Desultory Appraisals of Chan Monasteries); see *Lu Wending gongji*, 18 and 25.

the appreciation of tea.<sup>24</sup> The beverage prepared with the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis*, the tea plant, originated in southern China and became widespread in the whole country during the Tang dynasty (618–907). One of the main factors that aided in the diffusion of the drink was the publication of the *Chajing* 茶經 (Classic of Tea) by Lu Yu 陸羽 (733–804), the first treatise entirely dedicated to tea, which contributed greatly to the affirmation of its use among the elites. Following the *Chajing*, many other essays were dedicated to tea in the course of the imperial era. More than a half of these were produced in the last century of the Ming dynasty, a period characterised by an unprecedented growth of the merchant class and social competition, an increase of interest in luxury consumption, and a surge in the publication of essays on these subjects.<sup>25</sup> Another important factor that contributed to the diffusion of tea in China was the adoption of the drink in the diet of Buddhist monks, who consumed it within their monasteries and promoted it among the laity.<sup>26</sup> During the Tang dynasty, the association between tea and the imagery of Buddhist monastic life became a central theme in the appreciation and literary treatment of the beverage, and Buddhist monks held a reputation as great tea connoisseurs.<sup>27</sup> The author of the *Classic of tea*, Lu Yu, was raised in a Buddhist monastery and in his autobiography portrays himself as a hermit, who lives a simple life far from an official career and with a particular interest in Buddhism:

[Lu Yu] built a hut on the banks of Tiao Stream. Closing his door, he now reads books for pleasure. He does not mix with riffraff, but spends long days talking and gathering with eminent monks and lofty scholars. It is his habit to roam about in his skiff to mountain monasteries, wearing only a gauze kerchief, plaited sandals, shirt and shorts, and loincloth. He often walks alone in the wilds chanting Buddhist scripture and reciting ancient poetry.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Brook 1993: 89–134; Benn 2015: 172–197.

<sup>25</sup> The relations between social dynamics and material culture of the late Ming dynasty are discussed in the seminal study *Superfluous Things* by Craig Clunas (1991).

<sup>26</sup> For the role of the *Chajing* and Buddhism in the history of tea, see Benn 2005, 2015; Zanini 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Egan 2013: 69–74; Benn 2015: 72–95.

<sup>28</sup> Translation adapted from Owyong 2021. Chinese text: “結廬於苕溪之湄，閉關讀書，不雜非類，名僧高士，談讌永日。常扁舟往來山寺，隨身唯紗巾、藤屨、短褐、犢鼻。徃徃獨行野中，誦佛經，吟古詩。” For another translation of Lu Yu’s autobiography, see Mair 1994: 699–702.



In Lu Yu's text, one can easily trace the same framework and tropes used in the autobiography of Lu Shusheng offered in the introduction of the present study. Emulating Lu Yu, Lu Shusheng declares his deep fondness for tea, and reveals that he also wrote an essay about this drink, which is the only work of his that he chose to mention in this literary self-representation.<sup>29</sup>

## The *Chaliao Ji*

### *Structure and Contents*

The first known edition of the *Chaliao ji* is in the collectanea *Yimen guangdu* 夷門廣牘, compiled by Zhou Lüjing 周履靖 (fl. 1582–1597) and completed in 1597, when Lu Shusheng was still living and in his late eighties. The text is composed of two distinct parts that were most probably independent writings and eventually merged under the single title *Chaliao ji*.

The first part, which is comprised of 227 characters and ends with the expression 'informal record' (*manji* 謾記), recounts a tea gathering that Lu Shusheng held with two Buddhist monks inside the special room for tea that Lu built in his garden. The agricultural historian Wan Guoding estimates that the text of the 'informal record' was written around 1570, but he does not provide any evidence to support this dating.<sup>30</sup>

The second part is the short essay *Jiancha qilei*, 煎茶七類 (Seven Criteria for Brewing Tea), consisting of 259 characters and divided into seven sections. Each section has a numbered heading and contains prescriptions on distinctive topics concerning the preparation and appreciation of tea.<sup>31</sup> The essay is most likely the "Criteria for Tea divided into seven points" to which Lu Shusheng refers in his autobiography.

The paired parts that make up the *Chaliao ji* are representative of what Wai-Yee Li identifies as the "two distinctive categories in the late Ming-discourse on objects. One category includes books on the art of living and rules of style and taste. ... The other category consists of 'random notes' (*biji* 筆記) and

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<sup>29</sup> Mao Wenfang examines Lu Shusheng's autobiography and some appraisals of portraits of Lu himself in 'rustic garb' (*yefu* 野服), arguing that the broader forms of literary self-representation can be traced to the tradition of autobiographical writing started by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427); see Mao Wenfang 2008: 110.

<sup>30</sup> Wan Guoding 1958: 44–5.

<sup>31</sup> Parts of the *Jiancha qilei* have been translated into English by Warren V. Peltier. See Peltier 2011.

‘informal essays’ (*xiaopin* 小品), personal accounts of the possession and the experience of objects.’<sup>32</sup>

### ***Editions and Authorship***

The *Chaliao ji* has been published in various collections, in which it appears in different forms. Such differences have given rise to controversies about the authorship of a part of the text.

In the first edition in the *Yimen guangdu*, Lu’s text – consisting of the tea gathering’s ‘informal record’ and the *Seven Criteria* – is followed by an appendix entitled the *Chaliao fu* 茶寮附 (Addendum to the Tea Retreat), which is comprised of a collection of eighteen anecdotes on tea that were originally part of the *Qingyi lu* 清異錄 (Pure and Extraordinary Register) by the Song dynasty author Tao Gu 陶穀 (903–970).<sup>33</sup>

In 1612, a version of the *Chaliao ji* without the appendix was printed in the first edition of the *Chashu quanji* 茶書全集 (Complete Collection of Tea Writings), the earliest collectanea of ‘tea books’, compiled by Yu Zheng 喻政 (js 1595).<sup>34</sup>

The *Chaliao ji* was also included in Lu’s collected works in 1616. An identical text in two parts, is also found in the collectanea *Chengshi congke* 程氏叢刻 (Master Cheng’s Collected Prints), published by Cheng Bai’er 程百二 (dates unknown) in 1617, where the *Chaliao ji* is included as an appendix to the Song text *Pincha yaolu* 品茶要錄 (Essential Records on the Appreciation of Tea, ca 1074) by Huang Ru 黃儒 (js 1073).

An abbreviated version of the *Chaliao ji*, comprised of only the tea gathering ‘informal record’, was published in the 1620 instalment of the collectanea *Baoyantang miji* 寶顏堂秘笈 (Secret Satchel from the Baoyan Hall).<sup>35</sup> During the reign of Chongzhen 崇禎 (1628–1644), the shortened form of the *Chaliao ji* was included in the *Shuofu xu* 說郭續 (Sequel to the *Shuofu*) and attached to a compilation of sixteen quotations from various early texts on tea, preceded by the subheading *Chashi* 茶事 (Tea Matters).<sup>36</sup> While the *Shuofu xu* also features the text of the *Seven Criteria*, it does not attribute it to Lu Shusheng, but to the

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<sup>32</sup> Li 1995: 275–76.

<sup>33</sup> *Yimen guangdu*, 16: 42a–45b. *Qingyi lu*: 56a–60b. There are minor differences in the text of some of the anecdotes in the two versions. For a biography of Tao Gu, see Franke 1976: 1004–6.

<sup>34</sup> Nunome 1987: 145–46. The original title of the collectanea was the *Chashu* 茶書 (Writings on Tea). The title *Chashu quanji*, by which it is commonly known today, was first given in 1914; see Zanini 2017.

<sup>35</sup> The original title of this instalment was *Yizheng tang* 亦政堂 (The Hall of Also Participating in Governance), after the name of Shen Dexian’s studio; see Greenbaum 2007: 192.

<sup>36</sup> The *Shuofu xu* is included in *Shuofu sanzong*. For a textual history of the *Shuofu*, see Atwood 2017.

famous scholar and artist Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–1593).<sup>37</sup> The text with the same attribution to Xu Wei is also included in the late Ming collectanea *Jujia bibe* 居家必備 (Household Essentials, ca 1640s).<sup>38</sup>

The encyclopaedic anthology of quotations on tea, the *Xu Chajing* 續茶經 (Sequel to the Classic of Tea), edited by Lu Tingcan 陸廷燦 (fl. 1680s–1730s) around 1734, most likely relied on the *Shoufu xu*, as it attributes to Lu Shusheng only a short excerpt of the tea gathering ‘informal record’ and two quotations from the *Chashi* (Tea Matters), while attributing to Xu Wei three excerpts from the *Seven Criteria*. Wan Guoding considers the attribution of the *Seven Criteria* to Xu Wei as an error by the compiler of the *Shoufu xu*.<sup>39</sup>

Calligraphy in running style of the text of *Seven Criteria* signed by Xu Wei is included in the second volume of the collection *Tianxianglou cangjie* 天香樓藏貼 (Collected Inscriptions of the Tianxiang Tower), compiled by Wang Wanglin 王望霖 (1774–1836), and engraved in stone between the late 18th and early 19th century.<sup>40</sup> The inscription has a closing annotation that reads:

These *Seven Criteria* are the work of Lu Tong. It had various flaws and while I was transcribing it, I made some revisions and corrections. Written in the Fall of the year *ren-chen* (1592), by the Qingteng Daoist Xu Wei, in the Sanyi garden of the Zhu family, under mount Shifan.<sup>41</sup>

In this annotation, Xu Wei explicitly declares not to be the author of the text and erroneously attributes it to the Tang dynasty poet and famous tea enthusiast Lu Tong 盧仝 (790–835).<sup>42</sup>

On the basis of this evidence, Zheng Peikai and Zhu Zizhen, in their 2007 compilation of historical Chinese writings on tea, affirm that the *Seven Criteria* was spuriously attributed to Lu Shusheng and added to his *Chaliao ji* by the Ming compiler of the *Yimen guangdu*, in the same manner as the anecdotes were added from the 10th century *Qingyi lu*, and suggest that the text by Xu Wei should be considered the original version of this work.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Biography in Goodrich and Fang 1976: 609.

<sup>38</sup> *Jujia bibe*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Wan Guoding 1958: 45–6.

<sup>40</sup> The original engraved stone is preserved at the Shangyu Museum (Shangyu, Zhejiang). This calligraphy is discussed in Yu and Bai 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 235. Chinese text: “是七類迺盧仝之作也，中夥甚痼，余忙書，稍改定之。時壬辰秋仲，青藤道士徐渭書於石帆山下朱氏三宜園。”

<sup>42</sup> Lu Tong was a poet of the Tang dynasty, known for his lifelong study of Chinese tea culture. He never held official positions. As discussed below, the contents of the *Seven criteria* do not align with Tang dynasty tea practice.

<sup>43</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 234.

In regard to this argument, it should first be noticed that the text of the *Seven Criteria* attributed to Xu Wei in the *Shuofu xu* is consistent with the text in the *Yimen guangdu* and the *Chashu quanji*. All these printed versions show evident differences in wording and phrasing compared to Xu's calligraphy, and none of them includes the dated closing annotation found in the calligraphy. Furthermore, it appears that in drawing their conclusion, Zheng and Zhu did not consider the above quoted autobiography of Lu Shusheng, where Lu himself explicitly states that he composed the “*Criteria for Tea* divided into seven points.” So, by accepting the authenticity of his autobiography, we may also assume that both the tea gathering ‘informal record’ and the *Seven Criteria* were written by Lu Shusheng and that these two writings were probably first merged together by Zhou Lüjing, the compiler of the *Yimen guangdu*.

Additional textual evidence supporting Lu Shusheng's authorship is found in the *Pengchatu ji* 烹茶圖集 (Collection on the Painting ‘Preparing Tea’), a compilation of the colophons inscribed and mounted on the scroll of a painting by the Ming artist Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523), a work owned by Yu Zheng, the compiler of the *Chashu quanji*.<sup>44</sup> One of these colophons consists of the text of the *Seven Criteria* inscribed by Wang Siren 王思任 (1574–1646), a native of Yinshan (present Shaoxing, Zhejiang), who also attained the *jinshi* degree in the same 1595 examination session as Yu Zheng.<sup>45</sup> In the closing annotation, Wang Siren wrote:

I was feeling tipsy and yearning for tea, when my examination fellow Zhengzhi (Yu Zheng) arrived, carrying the scroll by Bohu (Tang Yin) that he had acquired. As we sat, we examined together the *Seven Criteria* by the Minister of Rites Lu from Huating, and I inscribed the text as a gift to him.<sup>46</sup>

It is most probable that Xu Wei, like Wang Siren, also just copied the *Seven Criteria* as a suitable text for writing calligraphy and cannot be given any credit for its authorship. Xu Wei's own misattribution of the *Seven Criteria* remains a question as to whether he deliberately chose to credit the Tang tea connoisseur Lu Tong or whether he lacked knowledge of its authorship by Lu Shusheng. As many other essays of the Ming dynasty, the *Chaliao ji* was not included in the *Siku quanshu*. The catalogue of the Imperial collection affirms that “it is

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<sup>44</sup> For Tang Yin's biography, see Cahill 1978: 193–200.

<sup>45</sup> Biography in Goodrich and Fang 1976: 1420.

<sup>46</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 436. Chinese text: “正醉思茶，而正之年兄，攜所得伯虎卷至，坐間偶檢華亭陸宗伯《七類》，錄以呈之。”

composed just of a few scanty words. It expresses the ideas of the author, but is not sufficient for investigation”.<sup>47</sup>

## Translation and commentary

### A Record of the Tea Retreat

#### 茶寮記

Since I reside in my garden, I set up a small retreat west of the wall of the Whistling Pavilion. Inside, I put a tea stove and prepared all the utensils, such as a gourd ladle for drawing water, an ewer for pouring, and what is needed for rinsing and wiping. I selected a servant with some knowledge on the preparation of tea to oversee it and another to assist him in boiling and drawing water. Whenever guests arrive, the vapour of the tea rises gently above the bamboo. If a Chan monk comes to visit me, we sit cross-legged face to face sipping tea without uttering a word.

園居敞小寮於嘯軒埤垣之西。中設茶竈，凡瓢汲罌注、濯拂之具咸庀。擇一人稍通茗事者主之，一人佐炊汲。客至，則茶煙隱隱起竹外。其禪客過從予者，每與余相對結跏趺坐，啜茗汁，舉無生話。

Lu Shusheng opens his text by presenting the special room for drinking tea that he built in his garden, providing information on its location, the equipment he arranged inside it, and the presence of proficient servants in charge of preparing the beverage.

Since the Song dynasty (970–1279), tea was consumed in China by all social classes and public teahouses serving different types of customers were already a ubiquitous element of the urban landscape.<sup>48</sup> However, the idea of a private space for tea was not part of the discourse of tea appreciation until the late Ming period.

An early Ming example of a space renowned for its association with tea-drinking that might have inspired the notion of the tea room is the Listening to Pines Hermitage (Tingsong an 聽松庵) of the monastery on Mount Hui (Huishan 惠山), in Wuxi 無錫. During the reign of the first Ming emperor, the abbot of the monastery gathered in the hermitage together with the painter

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<sup>47</sup> *Qinding Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, 116: 19a. See Wu and Xu 1990: 6. Chinese text: “均寥寥數言，姑以寄意而已，不足以資考核也。”

<sup>48</sup> Gernet 1962: 139.

Wang Fu 王紱 (1362–1416) and other scholars for tea, which was prepared with the water from the nearby famous spring, heated on a special tea stove made of bamboo.<sup>49</sup> The event was commemorated by the participants with paintings and poems; and in the course of the following century other literary gatherings for tea were held at the hermitage.<sup>50</sup>

The early Ming tea gathering at Mount Hui provided the model for later artists, especially the early sixteenth century group of Suzhou scholar-painters known as the ‘Wu School,’ who depicted scenes of literati studios and mountain retreats, wherein servants are busy at the stove preparing tea. Writings produced within the cultural milieu of Suzhou also reference tea meetings held at scholars’ libraries and studies.<sup>51</sup> Most importantly, however, Lu Shusheng is the first author known to have recorded the construction of a private room dedicated to tea and to have given the facility the general denomination of *chaliao* 茶寮.<sup>52</sup>

Although purposefully adopted by Lu to name his tea room, the term *chaliao* is not attested in any written source before the mid-sixteenth century, and its constituent *liao* 寮 was not even a common name for architectural structures during the late Ming.<sup>53</sup> The original meanings of *liao* include ‘bureaucracy’ (also written 僚) and ‘fellow officials that perform the same office’ (*tongguan* 同官). From the latter connotation, *liao* was adopted during the Song dynasty to designate a small cell for Buddhist monks to live in and meditate together. The first occurrence of the term *chaliao* during the late Ming dynasty similarly refers to a Buddhist monastic facility, being defined in the *Yilin fashan* 藝林伐山 by Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) as “the place for tea in a monastery” (*sengsi mingsuo* 僧寺茗所).<sup>54</sup> Lu Shusheng is very explicit in declaring the monastic inspiration behind creating this space as well as his entire garden, which – as he states below – “aspires to be a Chan abode.” The name of the adjacent Whistling Pavilion (Xiaoxuan 嘯軒) also evokes the imagery of hermitic life. The word *xiao* 嘯 indicates the practice of whistling and producing piercing sounds, which has been used since the third century by hermits and recluses to

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<sup>49</sup> For a biography of Wang Fu, see Goodrich and Fang 1976: 1373; Cahill 1978: 58–9.

<sup>50</sup> The bamboo stove and the literary meetings at the Huishan monastery are discussed in Song Houmei 1985, Sung 1987, and Zanini 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Owyong 2009: 51.

<sup>52</sup> Wu Zhihe distinguishes between the consumption of tea inside dedicated rooms on the one hand, and tea consumption in studios, main guest halls, and outdoors; see Wu Zhihe 1996: 131–51.

<sup>53</sup> As pointed out by Yuanxin Jiang in his dissertation, *liao* is not recorded as a name of a building type in the *Yuanye* 園冶 (The Craft of Gardens) by Ji Cheng 計成 (1582–1642); see Jiang 2019: 256.

<sup>54</sup> *Yilin fashan*, 15: 3a–b.

express contempt toward the world and exhibit an attitude of freedom and unconventionality.<sup>55</sup>

From the 1590s, the *chaliao* quickly became popular among tea enthusiasts and was discussed in the primary essays on tea and other aspects proper to the lifestyle of the literary elite: *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八牋 (Eight Memoranda on the Nurturing of Life, 1591) by Gao Lian 高濂 (fl. late 16th century), *Chajing* 茶經 (Classic of Tea, 1596) by Zhang Qiande 張謙德 (1577–1643), *Chashu* 茶疏 (Memorial on Tea, 1597) by Xu Cishu 許次紓 (1549–1604), *Kaopan yushi* 考盤餘事 (Desultory Remarks on Furnishing the Abode of the Retired Scholar, 1606) by Tu Long 屠隆 (1543–1605), and *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志 (Treatise on Superfluous Things, ca. 1615–1620) by Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 (1585–1636).<sup>56</sup>

In this later literature, the tea room is described in more secular terms and has lost its original strong monastic connotation. Moreover, in some texts the *chaliao* is described as an annex to the studio for keeping tea implements and boiling water, rather than a space for drinking the beverage with guests. After the Ming dynasty, *chaliao* progressively drifted from its original meanings as a monastic retreat or literati tea room and started to be used to denote public tea houses.<sup>57</sup>

Recently, the monk Mingliang of Zhongnan came from Tianchi. He brought me some bitter tea from Tianchi as a present and taught me in detail the method to prepare it. I had learned this procedure before from a scholar of Yangxian. Essentially, the methods to first regulate the fire and then heat the water, bringing it to the so-called ‘crab eyes’ or ‘fish eyes’, and controlling the state of boiling by the rising and the sinking of the spume, are all the same.

終南僧明亮者，近從天池來，餉余天池苦茶，授余烹點法甚細。余嘗受其法於陽羨士人，大率先火候，其次候湯所謂蟹眼魚目，叅沸沫沉浮以驗生熟者，法皆同。

The Buddhist master Mingliang 明亮 who prepared tea for Lu Shusheng came from Zhongnan shan 終南山, a mountain located in the Qinling range of Shaanxi province, south of the ancient capital Chang’an (present day Xi’an), where two

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<sup>55</sup> The development of the practice of *xiao* is discussed in Su 2006.

<sup>56</sup> The dates enclosed in brackets represent the first known date of either composition or publication. For an English translation of the section on tea of the *Zhangwu zhi*, see Owyong 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Jiang 2019: 268–9.

Buddhist monasteries were founded in the seventh century. The other monk present at the tea gathering, named Yanzhen 演鎮, was from Wutai shan 五臺山, a sacred mountain in northern Shanxi province, known as one of the ‘four great mountains’ of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>58</sup>

Monk Mingliang brought some tea that he personally procured while passing through Tianchi shan 天池山 (Heaven Pool Hill), a small hill west of the city of Suzhou.<sup>59</sup> Mount Tianchi and the nearby more famous Huqiu 虎丘 (Tiger Hill) were home to two Buddhist monasteries and, among Suzhou residents and visitors, were very popular destinations for excursions. Like other monastic centres located in hilly environments, the monks grew small quantities of tea with which they entertained distinguished guests or sold to supplement monastery incomes. During the mid-Ming period, Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435–1504), Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427–1509), Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470–1559) and other eminent literati of Suzhou left various records of their spring outings to these hills, where they visited monasteries and tried the freshly cured tea of the new harvest, greatly contributing to increasing the fame of these regional varieties at the national level.<sup>60</sup> In most dedicated essays of the late Ming, Tianchi and Huqiu were mentioned and ranked among the best teas.<sup>61</sup> As the celebrity and demand for the teas grew, Tianchi and Huqiu were widely counterfeited, and procuring the authentic product became substantially impossible without the necessary and often personal connections.

Lu Shusheng states that the brewing method, which was mastered to a level of excellence by the northern monk Mingliang, was the same as the one that he had previously learnt from a scholar from Yangxian 陽羨, of whose identity he does not reveal any additional information. Yangxian was the former name of Yixing county (in present Jiangsu province), on the west side of Lake Tai (Taihu 太湖). This area held a special position in tea history, producing one of the best tea sent as tribute to the imperial court in the Tang Dynasty. During the sixteenth century, Yixing also played a key role in the transformation of the methods and implements for preparing the beverage.

After the first emperor of the Ming abolished the production of caked tea as imperial tribute, loose leaf tea became standard in China. Popular taste

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<sup>58</sup> It is worth pointing out that tea was not produced in these areas of northern China.

<sup>59</sup> Wu Zhihe mistakenly associates Tianchi with a homonymous place in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province; see Wu Zhihe 1980: 27; 1996: 38.

<sup>60</sup> Steven D. Owyong made a thorough study of various tea-related paintings and writings produced by mid-Ming Suzhou scholars; see Owyong 2017. For the biographies of the three artists, see Goodrich and Fang, 1976: 1173, 1487, 1471.

<sup>61</sup> Huqiu is ranked first in *Zunsheng bajian*, *Kaopan yushi*, *Zhangwu zhi*, and Zhang Qiande’s *Chajing*. Tianchi tea was superseded by other varieties in the late sixteenth century.



favoured the brewing of whole leaf tea, whether by simmering or by steeping. However, in the first half of the dynasty, the Jiangnan elite continued to prefer the beverage prepared in the Song manner, grinding tea into a fine powder to mix with water in a bowl using a bamboo whisk, whisking until a frothy layer formed on the surface.<sup>62</sup>

The Yixing scholar Wu Shi 吳仕 (1481–1545) is credited with starting and promoting the use of the stoneware teapot, a new and distinctive kind of vessel for steeping loose-leaf tea; Wu Shi probably contributed to the acceptance of this form of preparation among the Jiangnan elite.<sup>63</sup> His father, Wu Lun 吳綸 (1440–1520), who never obtained a degree, was nonetheless acquainted with Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450–1524) and Wen Zhengming.<sup>64</sup> Wu Lun was reputedly a great tea expert and was the mentor of Gu Yuanqing 顧元慶 (1487–1565), author of the *Chapu* 茶譜 (Manual on Tea).<sup>65</sup> Wu Shi, who attained the *jinshi* degree in 1514, also befriended several of the most prominent scholars and artists of Suzhou and was esteemed as a great tea connoisseur. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Wu Shi started to patronise the manufacture of teapots made by some Yixing potters using the special local brownish coarse clay (*zisha* 紫砂), and promoted the use of these utensils among his literati friends.<sup>66</sup> Eventually, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, steeping whole leaf tea had become the standard way to prepare tea, and Yixing stoneware teapots had become the first choice of most tea connoisseurs, who preferred them to fine porcelain and precious metal ware.

The terms used by Lu to describe the bubbles that form on the bottom of a kettle while heating water, are recurrent in the whole corpus of Chinese essays on tea. The expression ‘fish eyes’ (*yumu* 魚目) refers to the first stage of boiling and is found in the *Chajing* by Lu Yu, who introduced the observation of the shape of the bubbles as an empirical method for estimating the temperature of the water.<sup>67</sup> The *Chalu* 茶錄 (Register on Tea) by Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067) –

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<sup>62</sup> For basic information on the evolution of tea drinking in China during the Ming dynasty, see Mair and Hoh 2009: 110–23; Driem 2019: 95–100. The use of powdered tea was introduced in Japan during the twelfth century and is still practiced in the tradition of the Japanese tea ceremony; see Mair and Hoh 2009: 84–109.

<sup>63</sup> The role of the Wu family in the promotion of Yixing stoneware pots is discussed in details in Jiang 2019: 182–206.

<sup>64</sup> For Wu Lun’s biography, see also Chang Bide 1965: 253. For Wang Ao’s, see Goodrich and Fang 1976: 1340.

<sup>65</sup> Wu Shi is mentioned in the preface; see Zheng and Zhu 2007: 179. For Gu Yuanqing’s biography, see Chang Bide 1965: 949.

<sup>66</sup> Lo 1986: 40.

<sup>67</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 12–3.

considered the second most important treatise on tea after the *Chajing* – further identifies ‘crab eyes’ (*xieyan* 蟹眼).<sup>68</sup>

However, what the monk prepared had a perfect pure taste, with a spotless creamy surface. This is the *samādhi* of achieving a pure and undisturbed flavour. In short, this is a flavour that only those who sleep among the clouds and sit on rocks with their feet dangling can appreciate. My place is far from the secular world and aspires to be a Chan abode. Who knows if because of this I cannot come to an understanding of [the words of] Zhaozhou? On the sixteenth day of the last Autumn month, I, Buddhist Layman Without Strife of the Suitable Garden, together with the monk Yanzhen of Wutai and the monk Mingliang of Zhongnan, tasted Tianchi tea in my tea retreat.<sup>69</sup> [This is an] informal record.

而僧所烹點，絕味清，乳面不黦，是具入清淨味中三昧者。要之，此一  
味非眠雲跂石人，未易領略。余方遠俗，雅意禪棲，安知不因是遂悟入  
趙洲耶。時杪秋既望，適園無諍居士與五臺僧演鎮終南僧明亮，同試天  
池茶於茶寮中。謾記。

Despite the significant transformations in tea culture that took place during the sixteenth century, many of the terms used by Lu Shusheng and other late Ming authors for discussing the beverage were quoted from earlier sources, where they originally referred to entirely different methods of preparation. The continued use of these terms aimed primarily at representing the authors’ admiration of antiquity and their connection with tradition. This “interaction with the past”, as Christian Murck has pointed out, “is one of the distinctive modes of intellectual and imaginative endeavour in traditional Chinese culture”.<sup>70</sup> For this reason, the terms cannot be taken at face value as actually being descriptive of the beverage drunk by Ming authors. This is the case of the expression *rumian* 乳面 (creamy or milky surface), used by Lu Shusheng to describe and praise the aspect of the tea prepared by his skilled guest. The term was created when in the past the beverage actually did consist of a suspension of tea powder and water with froth on the surface, but creamy is hardly applicable to the transparent liquor of steeped leaf tea in the late Ming.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 77.

<sup>69</sup> The ‘last Autumn month’ is the ninth month of the lunisolar Chinese calendar.

<sup>70</sup> Murck 1976: xi–xxi.

<sup>71</sup> Similar expressions are discussed below in the commentary to the section “Three – Brewing” of the *Seven criteria*.

The term *sanmei* 三昧 is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *samādhi*. In Buddhist texts, it indicates a profound state of concentration in meditation, which together with discipline (*śīla*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) are the three fundamental elements of Buddhist practice. In Chinese secular literature *sanmei* was often used in the vernacular sense of the ‘wonderful ability’ in doing something. It is found in some Song dynasty verses in the expression *diancha sanmei* 點茶三昧, ‘the *samādhi* of preparing tea’, and also in other late Ming works on tea.<sup>72</sup> In this regard, James Benn affirms that this use of *samādhi* for the ability in preparing tea “offers a powerful way of linking Buddhist practices with worldly customs— suggesting that the most refined method of making tea might require a deep meditational state that an eminent monk could be expected to access.”<sup>73</sup>

After explaining that only those who have attained the *samādhi* of preparing tea are capable of making a proper tea, Lu Shusheng adds that only people of a certain type can appreciate its taste. To define this sort of people, he again recurs to past, quoting the last line of the poem “Song of Tasting Tea at West Mountain Temple” (*Xishan lanruo shicha ge* 西山蘭若試茶歌) by the Tang poet Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), which expresses this view: “He who desires to know the pure and refreshing flavour of this flowery cream / Must be a person who sleeps among the clouds and sits on rocks with his feet dangling”.<sup>74</sup>

Lu Shusheng, who chose to withdraw from his official position and live in seclusion associating with hermits and Chan masters, includes himself in this category of people. He considers himself a peer of the monks in the ability to discern the flavour and quality of tea as well as in the potential to understand the very essence of the beverage. He aspires to comprehend the meaning of a famous Chan anecdote (*gong’an* 公案) in which the Tang dynasty Buddhist master Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778–897) welcomed all newly arriving monks with the sibylline phrase “go drink tea!” (*chicha qu* 吃茶去) to spur them to realise that the path to awakening is inseparable from the daily routines of life.<sup>75</sup>

Beyond this formal tribute to the tradition and the imagery of tea in Buddhist monastery, Lu Shusheng here offers a statement about his conception of

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<sup>72</sup> This expression can be found in poems exchanged by the famous Song scholar-official Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) and some Buddhist masters; see Benn 2015: 129.

<sup>73</sup> Benn 2015: 129.

<sup>74</sup> Chinese text: “欲知花乳清冷味，須是眠雲跣石人。” The poem is translated and discussed in Egan 2013: 72; Other translations in Benn 2015: 82–83; Steven Owyong, “Song of Tasting Tea at West Mountain Temple”, <https://www.tsiosophy.com/2015/07/song-of-tasting-tea-at-west-mountain-temple/>, accessed February 1, 2023.

<sup>75</sup> For a translation of the *gong’an*, see Benn 2015: 128.

taste in tea drinking as a factor of social distinction. This concept, which became a central theme in the discourse of tea appreciation in the late Ming dynasty, permeates throughout Lu's treatise and is the first to be discussed in his *Seven Criteria*.

### *Seven Criteria for Brewing Tea*

#### 煎茶七類

##### One – Moral Character

Brewing tea is not something to do carelessly. It is necessary that the quality of the person who does it and that of tea are mutually suited. For this reason, its methods are generally transmitted only among lofty scholars and recluses, those who foster rosy clouds and rocky springs in their bosom.<sup>76</sup>

##### 一人品

煎茶非浪漫，要須其人與茶品相得。故其法每傳於高流隱逸，有雲霞泉石磊塊胸次間者。

The term *renpin* 人品, refers to the ‘moral character’ and ‘internal disposition’ of a person. The character *pin* 品 originally denoted a ‘multitude of items’, from which derived its meanings ‘type’, ‘quality’ or ‘rank’. As a verb, *pin* means ‘judging’ and ‘ranking’, and was therefore utilised to classify men on the basis of their suitability to hold office in the bureaucracy. Craig Clunas considers the latter use of *pin* as preceding its application in classifying desirable types of objects and artworks, affirming that “men were ranked before things.”<sup>77</sup>

Lu Shusheng here explicitly matches the domain of morality with that of taste, stating that the preparation of high quality tea is something that only people of a comparable high quality can pursue and exchange.<sup>78</sup> In this category (which essentially overlaps with the one he defines in the sixth section on tea companions), he includes only people of learning detached from the mundane world, who aspire for high and remote places (*yunxia* 雲霞 ‘rosy clouds’) and beautiful sceneries (*quanshi* 泉石 ‘rocky springs’).<sup>79</sup> Doing this, he draws the boundaries of a group classified in social and cultural terms that – as Pierre

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. translation in Peltier 2011: 130.

<sup>77</sup> Clunas 1991: 89.

<sup>78</sup> Ronald Egan points out that correspondences between tea and human character are already expressed in some Song poems. See Egan 2013: 81.

<sup>79</sup> Both metaphors are found in various early poems.

Bourdieu argues – distinguishes itself for proper systems of dispositions (habitus) and related practices. Naturally, this is the group of people with whom Lu associates himself, as “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier.”<sup>80</sup>

### Two – Ranking Water Sources

Regarding the quality of water sources, mountain springs are the best, rivers are second, and wells follow. For well water, fetch it from frequently used wells, as the more is drawn, the fresher it is. However, the water has to be boiled immediately after drawing, for if it is stored for long time, its flavour loses freshness and clearness.<sup>81</sup>

### 二品泉

泉品以山水為上，次江水，井水次之。井取汲多者，汲多則水活。然須旋汲旋烹，汲久宿貯者，味減鮮冽。

The quality of water is an essential factor in the preparation and appreciation of tea, discussed in nearly all the essays on the beverage. The indications provided in Lu Shusheng’s text follow straightforwardly the most quoted threefold classification given in the *Chajing*.<sup>82</sup> In the course of the imperial period, various authors elaborated upon Lu Yu’s basic ranking of water and some treatises were wholly dedicated to the choice of water for tea and the classification of the best water sources. The two most substantial and detailed works were written in Lu Shusheng’s time: the *Shuipin* 水品 (The Classification of Water, ca 1554), by his fellow Huating native Xu Xianzhong 徐獻忠 (1493–1569);<sup>83</sup> and the *Zhuquan xiaopin* 煮泉小品 (Short Essay on the Boiling of Spring Water, ca 1554), composed by the Hangzhou scholar Tian Yiheng 田藝蘅 (1524– 1591?).<sup>84</sup> It was the practice of Ming tea connoisseurs to procure water by traveling to the most renowned springs or by having it delivered to their place, stored in jars.

### Three – Brewing

Use a lively fire to boil the water and tend it until bubbles and ripples start to form. When a spume floats on the surface, put tea in the vessel. First pour a little hot water, wait for water and tea to blend together,

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<sup>80</sup> Bourdieu 1984: 6.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. translation in Peltier 2011: 43.

<sup>82</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 13.

<sup>83</sup> Text in Zheng and Zhu 2007: 206–221. Biography in Goodrich and Fang 1976: 1330.

<sup>84</sup> Text in Zheng and Zhu 2007: 194–205. Biography in Goodrich and Fang 1976: 1286.

then pour to the brim. When the ‘cloud feet’ gradually open up and a creamy inflorescence forms on the surface, the flavour is at its fullest. As in ancient times tea was made in compressed cakes and ground into powder, it could easily release its flavour. Leaf tea, if prepared too quickly, is tasteless; if it is over-brewed, the flavour becomes dull and stagnant.<sup>85</sup>

### 三烹點

煎用活火，候湯眼鱗鱗起，沫餗鼓泛，投茗器中。初入湯少許，俟湯茗相投，即滿注。雲腳漸開，乳花浮面，則味全。蓋古茶用團餅碾屑，味易出。葉茶驟則乏味，過熟則味昏底滯。

As observed above, late Ming tea writers made a conspicuous use of expressions from early literature that can only be considered as knowledgeable tributes to past traditions. The word *jiancha* 煎茶 for ‘brewing tea’ in the title of Lu Shusheng’s treatise literally means ‘boiling tea’. This expression came into use during the Tang dynasty, when tea was actually prepared by boiling tea powder in a caldron, but continued to be used in later periods, when the beverage was prepared in completely different ways.<sup>86</sup>

These considerations are equally valid for the verbs *peng* 烹 ‘to cook’ and *dian* 點 ‘to point’ that form the title *pengdian* or brewing in this section of Lu’s text. Both terms date to the Tang and Song periods and were descriptive of how tea was prepared in those epochs, but continued to be employed (either alone or combined) as general designations for the preparation of the beverage in later times, when it was made by steeping tea leaves.

In this section of the *Chaliao ji* there are some other erudite expressions taken from earlier sources that cannot be interpreted in their original meaning. The word used by Lu Shusheng to refer to the ‘spume’ (or bubbling) that rises on the surface of plain water during heating – before it is mixed with tea – is a combination of the terms *mo* 沫 and *bo* 餗, which in the *Chajing* refer respectively to the thin and thick froth that forms on the surface of water mixed with tea powder while boiling in a caldron. Lu Yu considers this creamy foam as the ‘essence’ of the beverage and poetically compares it to the tender green leaves of aquatic plants or flower petals.<sup>87</sup>

Like in the description of the tea prepared by monk Mingliang in the ‘informal record’, the terms chosen by Lu Shusheng in this part of the text are not consistent with the steeping of whole leaf tea. The expression *yunjiao* 雲腳

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. translation in Peltier 2011: 74.

<sup>86</sup> The expression *zhucha* 煮茶 ‘boiling tea’ is used in the same manner.

<sup>87</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 13.

‘cloud feet’ is used in some Tang poems to refer to the curtain of rain falling from the clouds that can be seen in the distance. Since the Song period, this metaphor had been applied to the froth on the surface of whisked powder tea that, when it dissolves, reveals its underlying mixture of water and suspended pulverised tea particles gradually sinking.<sup>88</sup> The phrase *ruhua* 乳花 ‘creamy inflorescence’ also refers to the froth of the beverage prepared with powdered tea and is first found in the poem “A Friend Sends a Gift of Tea” (*Guren jicha* 故人寄茶) by the Tang dynasty grand councillor Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850).<sup>89</sup>

#### Four – Tasting Tea

When tea goes through the lips, first let it rinse the mouth, then sip it slowly and wait for a sweet salivation to moisten the tongue. In this way one can taste its genuine flavour. If it is mixed with fruit, its fragrance and flavour will all be lost.<sup>90</sup>

#### 四嘗茶

茶入口，先灌漱。須徐啜，俟甘津潮舌，則得真味。雜他果，則香味俱奪。

The *Chaliao ji* is the first text to provide a detailed description of the practical procedure and sensory experience of tea tasting. It recommends following a precise order and making an attentive evaluation of the aftertaste, as it is prescribed in modern professional tasting of tea and other food items.

For Lu Shusheng, as for the majority of tea experts of the late Ming dynasty, *zhen* 真, or ‘genuineness’, represents the foremost attribute of tea. When referring to a variety of tea, *zhen* defines it as ‘authentic’ and opposed to ‘fake’, following the contraposition between these two concepts, transversal to all fields of connoisseurship and central in the late Ming discourse on the appreciation of things.<sup>91</sup> When used to connote the flavour, fragrance and colour of tea, *zhen* means that these qualities preserve their ‘genuine’ and uncorrupted

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<sup>88</sup> The expression *yunjiao* 雲腳 (in Japanese *unkyaku*) is found in the *Kagakushū* 下学集 a Japanese lexicon dating from about 1444, which defines the phrase as “a name for bad tea and is so-called because its foam dissipates as quickly as the tendrils of clouds floating in the sky.” See Sen Sōshitsu XV 1998: 113. It is worth mentioning that *yujiao* was also one of the expressions used in Chan Buddhism to denote the travelling of a monk from monastery to monastery to seek guidance from enlightened teachers. See Pan 2017: 45.

<sup>89</sup> The verse of Li Deyu’s poem containing *ruhua* also includes the expression *xiajiao* 霞腳 ‘rosy cloud feet’, used with the same metaphorical meaning of *yunjiao*. Li’s poem is translated and discussed in Egan 2013: 71.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. translation in Peltier 2011: 94–5.

<sup>91</sup> Clunas 1991: 11–2.

original character. Given that *zhen* has no concrete descriptive value for taste, it could be inferred that Lu Shusheng finds this desirable quality in the sweetness (*gan* 甘) of the aftertaste. The primacy of *zhen* in the late Ming lexicon for tea evaluation is likely related to the pervasiveness of the concept in literary and philosophical discourse of the time. In the sixteenth century, ‘genuineness’ became one of the fundamental ideas of poetic criticism adopted by the most prominent literary schools. The aforementioned Ming philosopher Li Zhi, who zealously promoted the absorption of Buddhism in Neo-Confucianism, also championed ‘genuineness’ against what he considered the hypocrisy of his contemporaries.<sup>92</sup>

Another element common to late Ming treatises on tea is the disapproval of the addition of fruits, flowers and other substances to the beverage. According to some authors, the habit of adding things to tea became popular in the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>93</sup> This practice, despised by Jiangnan tea connoisseurs, was likely widespread among other elites, as indicated by the critical tone towards additives in the writings of the experts, and also confirmed by accounts from European travellers and missionaries who visited China during the late Ming period.<sup>94</sup>

#### Five – Moments for Tea

Lingering on a cool terrace, or in a hushed room. In front of a bright window, sitting at a gnarled wooden desk. Visiting Buddhist retreats and Daoist shrines. Amidst the pines caressed by the wind, or gazing at the moon in a bamboo grove. While lounging about and chanting leisurely. Indulging in pure conversations, or delving into books

#### 五茶候

涼臺靜室，明窗曲几，僧寮道院，松風竹月，晏坐行吟，清譚把卷。

In this list of the ideal circumstances for engaging in tea drinking, Lu Shusheng draws heavily from the imagery of the reclusive life, incorporating serene landscapes, moments of quiet solitude, and the peaceful stillness of a life away from the hustle and bustle of urban living. Two similar lists of times and situations suitable for tea are found in the *Chashu* by Xu Cishu.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Huang 2001: 39.

<sup>93</sup> This fact is first reported in *Zhuquan xiaopin* by Tian Yiheng; see Zheng and Zhu 2007: 98.

<sup>94</sup> Zanini 2019: 141–3.

<sup>95</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 274. For an English translation of Xu Cishu’s list of moments for drinking tea, see Blofeld 1985: 41–2.



The term *liao* ‘retreat’, referring here to Buddhist establishments, is the same one used by Lu Shusheng for the tea room discussed above. The expression ‘pure conversation’ (*qing tan* 清譚) refers to the elegant dialogue between cultured people, but was also used to denote debates on metaphysics and philosophy, popular among political and intellectual elites in the period from the third to the sixth century.<sup>96</sup>

#### Six – Tea Companions

Literati and scholars, Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, old recluses and people who are at leisure, or those who have obtained high official titles but transcend the worldly tastes.

#### 六茶侶

翰卿墨客，緇流羽士，逸老散人，或軒冕之徒，超軼世味。

After defining the moral character necessary for committing to the art of tea in the first section of his treatise, Lu Shusheng here provides a list of persons that meet the same requirements and with whom it is possible to share the beverage. In this list, he explicitly includes himself, the high official who had renounced to the honours of the court to live in seclusion. He considers all these different categories of recluses – very heterogeneous in terms of social and economic status – as moral and cultural peers. The other – the uneducated crowds, the vulgar rich merchants, and the petty and climbing officials – are all excluded.

#### Seven – Merits of tea

To dispel vexations and remove sluggishness; to clear the mind and dispel drowsiness; when feeling parched during a conversation or weary from reading. For what it does in these situations, a cup of tea should be recorded in the register of the meritorious and is not inferior to the [worthies of the] Lingyan Pavilion.

#### 七茶勳

除煩雪滯，滌醒破睡，譚渴書倦，是時茗椀策勳，不減凌煙。

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<sup>96</sup> The fly-whisk, mentioned by Lu in his autobiography, is an implement associated with the practice of ‘pure conversation.’ It is also an attribute of Chan masters and symbolizes the sweeping away of mental distractions and ignorance.

The medical properties of tea are discussed in the *Chajing* and many later essays, even if they are secondary to the discourse of the appreciation of the beverage. In Gu Yuanqing's *Chapu* there is a paragraph dedicated to the medicinal uses of tea, mainly based on Tang and Song sources.<sup>97</sup>

As a stimulant, tea can keep one awake and be a valuable aid in engaging in activities that require a clear mind. Lu Shusheng expresses how indispensable these benefits are to the pursuits of a scholar, eruditely comparing it with the importance of a sovereign having faithful ministers. The Lingyan Pavilion (*Lingyan ge* 凌煙閣) was a tower in the former imperial palace of the Tang dynasty, where in 643 the Emperor Taizong ordered the display of portraits depicting the twenty-four meritorious high officials who had helped him establish the Empire.<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion

Gardens, Buddhism, and tea are three major elements of late Ming gentry culture that first came together in Lu Shusheng's *Chaliao ji*. Although the less than 500-character text of the *Chaliao ji* constitutes only a very small part of Lu's entire literary oeuvre, we have shown that these topics played an important role in Lu's creation of a self-image as a member of the literati elite in Jiangnan after his retirement from officialdom. Moreover, the incorporation of the *Chaliao ji* in various compilations during Lu's lifetime and shortly after his death, is evidence of the importance that other late Ming scholars attached to Lu's contributions to tea culture.

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<sup>97</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2007: 181.

<sup>98</sup> *Jiu Tangshu*, 3: 17.

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