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# Between Wine and Tea: A Discussion Based on Master Taixu's Use of Dual Imagery

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**Abstract:** The imagery of wine and tea is important in classical and modern Chinese poetry, with an intricate relationship between the two especially evident in the work of Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), a prominent poet–monk in 20th-century China. Taixu's attitude toward wine—a drink that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture—evolves significantly over time, from initial approval to eventual condemnation due to its detrimental effects on both personal health and society. Nevertheless, it continues to feature prominently in his poetry. The same is true of tea, which Taixu often uses to evoke either Buddhist study or his own healthy lifestyle. This article explores this and other complex meanings in Taixu's poems, such as his association of wine with knights and tea with hermits. It also discusses how he achieves a delicate balance between the two beverages, sometimes employing both types of imagery in a single poem—a literary innovation that helped to establish his reputation as a central figure in modern Chinese poetry.

**Keywords:** imagery; poetry; Taixu; wine and tea; knight and hermit; Buddhist disciplines

## 1. Introduction

Taixu, a prominent monk and influential Buddhist leader, played a crucial role in the development of Chinese Buddhism in the first half of the 20th century. Taixu's life, thoughts and achievements have been extensively studied.[1] Yet, his talent as a poet is often overlooked.[2] His deep connection with Chinese poetry can be traced back to his upbringing and education. Both his grandmother and his youngest uncle were accomplished poets, so Taixu received effective guidance in this genre throughout his formative years (TDQ: XXXI: 156–160).[3] Thereafter, he continued to hone his poetic skills through collaborations with mentors, associates, disciples, and students,[4] with his first poetry collection, *Meian Shilu* 昧盦詩錄 (*The Poetry Collection of Meian*; published 1916), serving as a testament to his burgeoning prowess (ibid., p. 197).[5] He had written more than a thousand poems by the time of his death in 1947, with the vast majority of these subsequently collated in the volume 34, "Shicun 詩存" (Poetry Collection) of the *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書 (*Collected Works of Master Taixu*), a comprehensive anthology edited primarily by Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005),[6] one of Taixu's most distinguished disciples.

Taixu uses over 100 different types of imagery in his poetry. It includes both natural imagery, such as clouds and the moon,[7] flowers and insects, and artificial imagery, such as lamps and candles,[8] wine and tea. Taixu inherited and refined these classical poetry images, making them essential mediums for expressing his thoughts and emotions.

Wine and tea figure prominently throughout Chinese literature, especially from the Tang dynasty onwards.[9] For instance, Taixu was just one of many 20th-century poets to incorporate both beverages within his works, although few, if any, of his contemporaries returned to these themes quite so often, with wine featuring in 16 of his poems and tea in no fewer than 28.

The connection between wine, tea, and Chinese religion runs deep, with both drinks mentioned repeatedly in Buddhist and Daoist scriptures as well as secular literature.[10] However, whereas tea-drinking has never been a contentious issue for either monastics or

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laypeople,[11] the appropriateness of wine consumption in monasteries has long been a matter of considerable debate.[12] On the one hand, wine plays a significant role in a number of important monastic rituals, especially those involving senior monks and government officials (Benn 2015, p. 58). Indeed, it is so integral to these ceremonies that it cannot be replaced by some other beverage, such as tea (ibid., p. 47). On the other hand, the consumption of alcohol is explicitly proscribed in Chinese Buddhism (ibid., p. 55). Therefore, monastics face a significant dilemma: should they follow ritual practice or remain wholly faithful to the Buddhist precepts? This internal conflict manifests in the literary works of many monks. For instance, Taixu displays somewhat ambiguous attitudes toward both beverages in his poems, reflecting the complex interplay of cultural tradition, Buddhist discipline, and personal spirituality throughout the monastic community.

This paper adopts two distinct perspectives to explore the evolution of Taixu's use of wine and tea imagery over the course of his literary career:

How does he portray wine? Does he himself consume wine? How does he portray tea? Does tea function as an alternative to wine in his poetry?

What are the symbolic meanings associated with his depictions of wine and tea in his poetry? Does he balance the two?

In addition, the paper compares Taixu's wine and tea poetry with the works of ancient poets and 20th-century contemporaries to shed further light on the meanings conveyed by such imagery. Finally, it examines Taixu's incorporation of elements borrowed from a number of illustrious predecessors within his own work.

## 2. Did Taixu Consume Wine, and Should He Have Done So?

Wine has a rich history in China dating back to the Xia 夏 dynasty, approximately 4000 years ago.[13] In that era, a host of naturally fermented beverages—known generically as sweet wine (*tianjiu* 甜酒)—were made from a variety of fruits and grains. Moreover, early Buddhist scriptures such as the *Mūlasarvâstivāda-vinaya-kārikā* (*Genben shuo yiqie youbu pinaiye song* 根本說一切有部毗奈耶頌) indicate that wine was produced from similar raw ingredients around the same time in India:

> 諸麴等雜物，醞釀方得成；眾人共許者，是名為大酒。若以皮果花，汁等用成就；此名為雜酒，斯皆能醉人。
>
> Various grain ingredients, including yeast, are combined for fermentation, resulting in matured wine. When approved by the whole community, this is known as grand wine. Alternatively, concoctions made with peel, fruit, flowers, and other ingredients are called mixed wine. All of these [beverages] can cause inebriation.[14]

Later, the same text forbids the consumption of either grand wine or mixed wine on the grounds that each has the potential to induce the offense (*dezui* 得罪) of drunkenness (T24, no. 1459, p. 643b5).

There were countless developments in Chinese winemaking over subsequent centuries, especially in relation to distillation.[15] These advances contributed to a substantial increase in wine production from the late imperial era onwards:

> The period from the late Qing dynasty (1644–1911) to the National Government period saw a transition of wine making in China … Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, grape and wine production in China has increased.[16]

China's east coast—which was already the country's principal economic and trading center—became the prime location for winemaking too, with Zhejiang 浙江, Taixu's home province, emerging as a key player in the industry.[17] Consequently, he was almost certainly familiar with the beverage from an early age. This reality—and the frequency with which wine appears in Taixu's poems—begs the question whether he himself ever drank it. As we have seen, Buddhist disciplinary guidelines expressly prohibit the consumption of wine (or any other intoxicating beverage). Yet, if Taixu dutifully abstained from alcohol throughout his lifetime, why was wine such a recurring theme in his poetry?

One of Taixu's prose works indicates that he knew of wine—and learned of its effects—when still a child:

> 憶餘總角時，春深日暮，玩弄既倦，間旋繞於鄉老之膝前，嘗聞其相談曰：昔有一士者，一樵者，一漁者；士者處城，樵者處山，漁者處江。一旦邂逅，以漁者之魚，烹以樵者之薪，傾士者所攜酒而共酌之，三杯落肚，萬慮忘懷！
>
> Recalling a moment of leisure during my youth, as the late spring day transitioned into dusk and I grew tired of playing, I found myself idly strolling around the knees of the village elders. There, I overheard their conversation: "Once, there was a warrior dwelling in the city, a woodcutter in the mountains, and a fisherman by the river. By chance, their paths crossed, and with the fish caught by the fisherman, cooked over the wood gathered by the woodcutter, they poured the wine brought by the warrior, and together shared in the revelry. After three cups had been consumed, myriad concerns were forgotten."[18]

This narrative is of interest primarily because the village elders (*xianglao* 鄉老)[19] provide scant details of the meal, instead focusing on the positive effect of the wine, which causes all three of the protagonists to forget their worries and concerns. Taixu dates this episode to 1904—when he was still in *zongjiao* 總角 (hair knots)[20]—the very year he underwent full monastic ordination at the Tiantong Monastery 天童寺.[21] Given the fondness with which he recounts this memory—and the fact that he presents no negative consequences of the three strangers' revelry—we may infer that he held a generally favorable view of wine during his childhood. Thereafter, though, his attitude toward alcohol consumption shifted significantly, as is clear from one of his lectures:

> 飲酒的行為雖不侵害他人，但因飲酒易引起淫殺等惡行，所以酗酒滋事，是世人所熟知的。更以飲酒易成嗜好，使生理心理失卻健康，也應戒除，故有些國家用法律明文來禁止的。
>
> While drinking wine may not directly harm others, its consumption is widely recognized for its potential to lead to immoral behavior, such as licentiousness and violence. Excessive drinking, known for causing disturbances, is a well-known societal issue. Furthermore, wine consumption fosters addictive tendencies, compromising physical and mental well-being, which underscores the need for restraint. Consequently, some countries employ explicit legal measures to prohibit drinking wine.[22]

Taixu delivered this lecture to an audience of monks and laypeople at the Yanqing Monastery 延慶寺,[23] Ningbo, in February 1947, just a few months before his death. Throughout the speech, he repeatedly stresses that wine consumption should be prohibited, as it affords no benefits to individuals; indeed, it poses both physical and mental health risks and contributes to various societal problems. Consequently, Taixu advocates complete abstinence for monks and laypeople alike, although he places particular emphasis on strict discipline among the monastic community (TDQ: XVIII: 259). Hence, it is clear that he no longer construes wine consumption as a personal preference but rather regards it as a societal and especially a Buddhist issue. For instance, he stresses that abstaining from alcohol is one of the five precepts (*wujie* 五戒):

> 所謂五戒：一、不殺生而仁愛，二、不偷盜而義利，三、不邪淫而禮節，四、不妄語而誠信，五、不飲酒而調善身心。
>
> The so-called five precepts are as follows: first, to refrain from killing and practice compassion; second, to abstain from stealing and uphold righteousness and integrity; third, to avoid sexual misconduct and observe propriety; fourth, to refrain from false speech and uphold sincerity; fifth, to abstain from drinking wine and maintain the balance of body and mind.[24]

While Taixu cites the easily accessible five precepts in this lecture (TDQ: XVIII: 247), in earlier works he supports his case for a ban on alcohol consumption with reference to a host of more arcane Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Upāsaka-śīla-sūtra* (*Youpo saijie jing*

優婆塞戒經) (T1, no. 1, p. 70c3–5),[25] the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (*Da zhidu lun* 大智度論) (T53, no. 2122, pp. 928c12–929a3),[26] and the *Fenbie shan'e baoying jing* 分別善惡報應經 (*Sutra on Distinguishing Good and Evil Karmic Retribution*).[27] In his opinion, the practice can easily lead to intoxication and subsequent errors, personal injury, or even family disintegration. Consequently, according to Taixu, it deserves its place within the five precepts, as prohibiting wine-drinking is like equipping people with armor that protects them against a host of potential dangers.[28] Finally, he adds that the Buddhist disciplinary guidelines consider alcohol avoidance as both a behavioral commitment and a self-vow (*zishi* 自誓) to reduce the risk of future transgressions (TDQ: XVIII: 258).

Clearly, then, by the end of his life, Taixu was an opponent of alcohol consumption and a proponent of strict Buddhist discipline. However, this does not tell the whole story of his personal relationship with wine during his monastic career, as is evident from the following couplet:

> 憂來酌酒曾同醉，興到論文許共知。
>
> In sorrow, [we] once shared wine and became intoxicated,
>
> In joy, discussing literature, we mutually comprehend.[29]

Taixu wrote these lines after reconnecting with an old friend he affectionately terms *laoai* 老愛.[30] Of course, there is nothing unusual about two friends sharing a glass of wine during a discussion about literature, but it is rather surprising that Taixu—an ordained monk—not only chose to record the event but also acknowledged that both of them were drunk.

That said, the consumption of wine is not entirely forbidden in Buddhism's monastic guidelines. For instance, according to the *Dharmaguptaka vinaya* (*Sifen lü* 四分律), it may be used for medicinal purposes:

> 不犯者，若有如是如是病，餘藥治不差以酒為藥；若以酒塗瘡，一切無犯。
>
> For those who have not committed an offense, if they suffer from specific illnesses, and other medications prove ineffective, wine may be used as a medicinal treatment. Similarly, applying wine to wounds does not constitute an offense.[31]

Furthermore, as Benn (2015, p. 43) points out, during the Tang dynasty, "alcohol had to be purchased specially, usually to greet the arrival of senior monks from elsewhere or to receive government officials."[32] This tradition of wine-drinking on ceremonial occasions might explain why Taixu had no compunction about sharing a drink with his old friend, who may well have been a senior monk himself. However, their consequent "intoxication" is another matter, as this is invariably categorized as an offense in the monastic disciplinary guidelines. On this occasion, Taixu may have used the term as a poetic device to stress the depth of his emotion during the reunion; however, similar descriptions throughout his work appear to confirm that he sometimes drank to excess. Moreover, this impression is seemingly corroborated in a preface written by Chen Songluo 陳誦洛 (1897–1965),[33] another close friend:

> 猶憶三年前，與太虛把臂[34]越中,[35]縱酒高吟，每醉、予輒仰天而歌曰："我醉自眠君自顛，路人往往指作仙，此輩何曾識此樂，識與不識俱可憐"。言已，相視而笑。
>
> I still remember three years ago, when I linked arms with Taixu in Yuezhong. We indulged in wine and raised our voices in song. Whenever we became intoxicated, I would gaze up at the sky and sing, "I am drunk, and I fall asleep. You are drunk, and you tumble. Passersby often point at us as if we are immortals. These people have never known our joy. Whether they understand it or not, we pity them all." With these words, we exchanged glances and laughed.[36]

From this, we may infer that it was not unusual for Taixu to end up giddily drunk when socializing with friends. He was seemingly able to set aside his monastic identity for the evening and thereby disregard Buddhism's prohibition against wine. Instead,

he would assume the role of a classical poet and immerse himself in China's traditional wine culture.

No other poet–monk depicts wine-drinking in such a direct and detailed manner in their work. Although Xuyun 虛雲 (1840–1959), Yinguang 印光 (1862–1940), and Hongyi 弘一 (1880–1942) all discuss the ban on alcohol consumption at some length,[37] none of them admits to breaking this rule. Rather, their use of wine imagery tends to be confined to descriptions of natural scenes, without any mention of the drink's consumption.[38] This is in marked contrast to the work of Su Manshu 蘇曼殊 (1884–1918), a friend and teacher of Taixu,[39] who enjoyed wine and composed several poems on the subject. For instance, in the summer of 1914, he wrote:

年華風柳共飄瀟，酒醒天涯問六朝。

The years, like wind-blown willows, drift together,

Awakening from wine, [I] question the six dynasties in distant realms.[40]

However, Su Manshu was not a monk in the true sense of the word, as it seems he never received full ordination.[41] As a result, Taixu stands alone among modern Chinese monastics as an exponent of wine poetry. In addition to discussing wine-drinking from the perspective of Buddhist discipline, he examines his own behavior in relation to alcohol consumption. This self-reflection enables him to employ wine imagery effectively in his poetry and express a variety of meanings through that imagery, as we shall see later.

## 3. Tea: Taixu's Choice for a Healthy Life

Tea underwent a long development process in China. Although camellia leaves were harvested during the Warring States period 戰國 (475–221 BCE), these were not processed, so the tea had a very limited shelf life and had to be consumed locally (Benn 2015, p. 43). Half a millennium later, in the Tang dynasty, unfermented leaves were steamed, pounded, and molded into tea cakes (*chabing* 茶餅) (ibid., p. 8). It is important to note that the resulting drink was not tea as we know it today. Rather, it usually resembled soup due to the addition of various other ingredients, as described in the *Cha jing* 茶經 (*Classic of Tea*), the world's first book on the subject, written by the renowned poet Lu Yu 陸羽 (733–804):[42]

或用蔥、薑、棗、橘皮、茱萸、薄荷之等，煮之百沸，或揚令滑，或煮去沫，斯溝渠間棄水耳，而習俗不已.

Sometimes onion, ginger, jujube fruit, citrus peel, dogwood berries or peppermint are boiled along with the tea. Such ingredients may be scattered across the top for a glossy effect, or boiled together and the froth drawn off. Drinks like this are no more than the swill of gutters and ditches; still, it is common practice to make tea that way.[43]

Similarly, the late Tang poet and literatus Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (838–883)[44] explained:

稱茗飲者，必渾以烹之，與夫瀹蔬而啜者無異也。

Those who referred to tea as *ming* 茗 necessarily brewed it in a manner similar to cooking, like boiling vegetables and sipping the resulting soup.[45]

Lu Yu contrasted this concoction with the pure, clear beverage we know today, which he termed *cha*茶.

Both of these quite different drinks feature in poetic tea imagery (Benn 2015, p. 9), so poets must choose their words carefully to avoid confusion. For instance, in the following examples, Taixu brews *cha* in the first poem and *ming* in the second:

煮茶且向簷前坐，佛跡重興話五天。[46]

Brewing tea, I sit beneath the eaves,[47]

Discussing the revival of Buddha's teachings in the five celestials.[48]

圍爐煮茗夜談清，身意安恬夢亦輕。

Gathering around the stove, brewing tea, engaging in evening conversations,

Body and mind at ease, dreams become weightless.[49]

In the first couplet, thirst-quenching, pure *cha* is the perfect accompaniment to a serene discussion of the Buddha's teachings. By contrast, conversations with friends and family around a stove are more relaxed, informal affairs, as exemplified by Taixu's ease and weightless dreams in the second extract. Such discussions frequently extend into the early hours of the morning, so the more substantial, filling *ming* is the obvious choice. Thus, Taixu's use of *cha* or *ming* imagery in his poetry tends to depend on the specific circumstances he wishes to evoke.

After the Tang dynasty, the production of tea increased rapidly in China. First, during the Song 宋 dynasty, advances in processing techniques, such as pressing and rolling, led to a significant improvement in the quality of tea cakes. Subsequently, in the Yuan and Ming 明 (1368–1644) dynasties, loose green tea, which is still the most prevalent form of tea today, emerged due to the application of new fermentation techniques (Benn 2015, p. 9). It was in this era that tea-drinking became a commonplace activity throughout Chinese society. In addition, it became closely associated with a life of spiritual contemplation for Buddhists and secular literati alike (ibid., pp. 144, 197).

Tea processing was perfected during the Qing dynasty, and tea-drinking habits were very similar to those of today. Tea houses (*chaguan* 茶館)[50] proliferated, inspiring a variety of tea-related art forms, such as tea songs, dances, operas, and stories.[51] By Taixu's time, tea-drinking was a highly popular leisure activity, as evidenced by the following extract from the *Qing bai lei chao* 清稗類鈔 (*Classified Anthology of Qing Anecdotes*), compiled by Xu Ke 徐珂 (1869–1928):[52]

> 茶肆飲啜，有盛以壺者，有盛以碗者。有坐而飲者，有臥而啜者。進入茶肆者，終日勤苦，偶於暇日一至茶肆，與二三知己瀹苟深談者有之，日夕流連，樂而忘返，不以廢時失業為可惜者亦有之。
>
> In tea houses, consumption varies, some use teapots, others bowls. There are those who sit and drink, and those who recline and sip. Those who frequent tea houses, amidst their daily tasks, occasionally enjoy a break by visiting a tea house. Some engage in deep conversations with two or three close friends, while others linger from day to night, finding joy and forgetting to return, not considering it a waste of time or neglect of duties.[53]

This sort of relaxed, casual behavior marked a significant departure from traditional Chinese dining etiquette,[54] and Taixu was one of many to embrace it:

> 預慶黃龍茶[55]當酒，晚情欣對菊花黃。
>
> In anticipation, celebrating with Huanglong tea instead of wine,
>
> In the evening ambience, joyfully facing the yellow chrysanthemums.[56]

Taixu wrote this poem after a reunion with friends on Jinyun Mountain 縉雲山[57] during the Double Ninth Festival (*Chongyang jie* 重陽節)[58] in 1943. As we saw earlier, he was not averse to drinking alcohol on such occasions, but here, significantly, he stresses that the group's beverage of choice was tea, rather than wine.

For many years, tea was perceived as little more than an accompaniment to wine (Benn 2015, p. 10), but that changed with the discovery of Wang Fu 王敷's *Cha jiu lun* 茶酒論 (*A Debate between Tea and Wine*)[59] in Dunhuang around the turn of the 20th century.[60] Far from portraying tea as some sort of subsidiary beverage, this Tang-era manuscript revealed the crucial, positive role it played in China's medieval monasteries, in contrast to the entirely detrimental effects of wine:

> 我之茗草，萬木之心。或白如玉，或似黃金。名僧大德，幽隱禪林。飲之語話，能去昏沉。供養彌勒，奉獻觀音。千劫萬劫，諸佛相欽。酒能破家散宅，廣作邪淫。打卻三盞後，令人只是罪深。
>
> My name is *ming*, the heart of ten thousand plants. Some are white like jade, others resemble yellow gold. Renowned monks and elder monks reside in the groves of monasteries. When consumed while discussing, I can eliminate dullness and fatigue. I am offered to Maitreya and dedicated to Guanyin (*Avalokiteś-*

> *vara*). The various Buddhas are pleased with me over the course of a thousand or even ten thousand *kalpa*s. Wine can destroy families and break up homes, leading to depravity and licentiousness. After three cups, people fall into deep sin.[61]

Clearly, then, medieval Buddhists believed that tea enhanced their physical health, as they drank it to combat fatigue. Moreover, the tea plant is beautiful—"like jade" or "yellow gold"—so the resulting beverage is an appropriate gift for divine Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Specifically, Wang Fu (in the guise of tea itself) mentions Maitreya and Guanyin, both of whom had sizeable devotional cults during the Tang dynasty (Benn 2015, p. 49). Meanwhile, he casts wine in an entirely negative light, characterizing it as the source of a variety of transgressions and wrongdoings. Therefore, tea had three distinct advantages over wine: it was physically beneficial; it enjoyed the approval of important deities; and it did not lead monastics down the path of immorality.

Around the same time as Wang Fu was composing *Cha jiu lun*, the poet Lu Tong 盧仝 (795–835)[62] enumerated more of the physical and mental health benefits of tea-drinking, based on his own experience:

> 一碗喉吻潤，兩碗破孤悶。三碗搜枯腸，唯有文字五千卷。四碗發輕汗，平生不平事，盡向毛孔散。五碗肌骨清，六碗通仙靈。七碗吃不得，唯覺兩腋習習清風生。
>
> One bowl moistens the throat, two bowls dispel loneliness and melancholy. Three bowls clear the withered intestines, finding nothing there but five thousand scrolls of writing.[63] Four bowls generate a light sweat, life's injustices dissipate through every pore. Five bowls clarify the flesh and bones, six bowls make the spirit ethereal. Unable to consume seven bowls, one only feels a gentle breeze beneath the armpits.[64]

Hence, tea-drinking not only improves physical health by quenching the drinker's thirst, causing him to sweat, and clearing his bowels but also banishes his negative emotions and leaves him feeling relaxed, as if he were immortal. Moreover, it provides the inspiration authors need to compose their literary works. Therefore, Lu Tong establishes a direct link between tea consumption and the creative process, presenting it as a supremely healthy habit for himself and his fellow literati.

Although Taixu is not quite as effusive in his praise of tea, the beverage still played an important role in his life. For him, tea-making was an intricate process that sometimes began with picking the leaves himself:

> 荒寒洗盡世繁華，自掘松根自摘茶，一掏流泉清可煮，把將茆蓋臥煙霞。
>
> In desolation and cold, washing away the world's prosperity,
>
> Digging beneath the pine roots, picking tea on my own.
>
> A scoop, fetching pure spring water for brewing,
>
> Lying under a thatched cover in the mist and rosy clouds.[65]

As this extract demonstrates, in addition to selecting the right leaves, Taixu clearly understood the importance of brewing them in clean, clear water. Indeed, he returns to this theme in two further poems:

> 汲得山中竹引泉，烹茶飲罷倚松眠。
>
> Drawing water from the bamboo-tube spring in the mountains,[66]
>
> Brewing tea, drinking, then reclining against the pine, [I] doze.[67]
>
> 境勝渾忘俗，泉清可煮茶。
>
> In the serene and superior environment, [I] forget worldly concerns;
>
> Clear springs, suitable for brewing tea.[68]

Therefore, irrespective of whether the water is sourced from the high mountains via bamboo tubes or directly from a clear spring, it must be pure if Taixu is to brew the high-

quality tea that helps him relax, doze, and forget his worries. By contrast, the brewing process itself seems far less important, as Taixu never feels the need to explain what it entails.

Having brewed the tea, Taixu is finally able to savor it:

消受一杯茶味永，飄然曳杖市梢回。

Accepting a cup of tea's enduring taste,

Drifting leisurely, I stroll back from the ground's edge.[69]

閑消受茶清香靜，幾度徘徊。

Leisurely accepting tea's pure fragrance, tranquil,

Wandered several times.[70]

In both of these couplets, Taixu uses the phrase *shou* 受 (accept) to denote the act of tasting the tea for the first time. After meticulously picking the right leaves, finding a source of pure water, and brewing the tea, he consumes the fragrant end product serenely, regardless of whether it fully meets his expectations.

Tea represents Taixu's tranquility and is a constant feature of his daily life, so it is hardly surprising that he often references it in his work. For instance, he draws an analogy between studying the Buddha Dharma and drinking tea in the introduction to a lecture he presented to Buddhists at the Minglun Hall 明倫堂 in August 1923:[71]

> 佛法非一時中所能盡述，故今講佛法，亦無從講起。然諸君欲知佛法之妙亦不難，譬如飲茶入口，即知其味，不飲則終不能知也。
>
> The Buddha Dharma is not something that can be fully expounded within a limited time; therefore, when lecturing on the Buddha Dharma today, there is no specific starting point. However, it is not difficult for all of you to understand the wonders of the Buddha Dharma. It is like sipping tea; once it enters the mouth, you immediately know its taste. Without drinking, one will never truly understand.[72]

According to Taixu, both the Buddha Dharma and tea are extraordinary, esoteric subjects whose inner mysteries can be fully comprehended only through personal exploration. Therefore, the process of sipping tea is akin to tasting the flavors of the Dharma (*fawei* 法味). As discussed earlier, tea-drinking was a widely practiced leisure activity in early 20th-century China, so all of those in attendance would have been familiar with the beverage. Moreover, Taixu considered it an effective means of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Hence, we can trace his formulation of this clear, concise analogy not only to his personal fondness for tea but also to his awareness of prevailing social trends and innate understanding of what would resonate with his audience.

That said, some of the attendees may not have approved. Whereas Taixu was convinced that tea-drinking was a wholesome pastime—and therefore an appropriate subject to discuss alongside the Buddha Dharma—others were less enthusiastic. For instance, according to the *Qing bai lei chao*, excessive tea consumption can harm the nervous system and lead to insomnia. Moreover, it may cause dizziness—known as tea inebriation (*chazui* 茶醉)—if consumed on an empty stomach, similar to the effect of drinking alcohol (K. Xu 1984, p. 6307). However, if Taixu was aware of these concerns, he chose to ignore them and continued to characterize tea as a pure, healthy option in both his prose and his poetry.

## 4. The Meanings of Wine and Tea Imagery in Taixu's Poetry

Taixu frequently employs wine and tea imagery when discussing both internal emotions and external factors—such as Buddhist discipline and monastic living conditions—in his poetry. This imagery has a number of symbolic meanings that are closely related to the poet's personality. Here, it should be noted that wine and tea do not appear in isolation in Taixu's work; rather, their meanings often intersect, offering a complex reflection of the poet's personal philosophy. Similar intersections are explored in *Xiaochuang youji* 小窗幽记 (*Records beside a Small Window*), a collection of essays composed by Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639)[73] during the Ming dynasty:

> 熱腸如沸，茶不勝酒，幽韻如雲，酒不勝茶，茶類隱、酒類俠。酒固道廣，茶亦德素。
>
> The passion burns as if it is boiling, tea cannot surpass wine; the subtlety is as profound as clouds, wine cannot surpass tea. Tea represents the hermit's qualities, and wine represents the knight's characteristics. While wine indeed embraces a broad path, tea possesses virtuous simplicity.[74]

Both wine and tea can convey a wide variety of meanings. For instance, wine generates passion, enormous energy, and excitement, all of which are considered knightly qualities. In contrast, tea promotes the typically hermitic attributes of serenity, subtlety, and carefreeness. Taixu exhibits a keen interest in both of these groups of characteristics. On the one hand, he admires knights who engage in battles, expressing appreciation for their strength and unwavering determination (*buqu bunao* 不屈不撓) (TDQ: XIII: 148). On the other, he acknowledges that hermits are transcendent and mentally fulfilled (*yongrong zide* 雍容自得) (TDQ: XXXII: 142). Moreover, he frequently uses both types of imagery in a single poem, reflecting his desire to achieve some sort of harmony between the two seemingly diametrically opposed personalities they represent. However, before focusing on this aspect of Taixu's work, it is important to explore the various aspects of wine and tea imagery in greater depth.

During events such as the La Festival (*Lajie* 蠟節),[75] solemn worship of the gods of agriculture is frequently followed by singing and excessive drinking (Gong 2022, p. 15). In such moments, the revelers may be described as succumbing to *zuikuang* 醉狂 (drunken madness)—a character trait that is often associated with knights in classical Chinese literature.

> 醉者攻擊外物與外在秩序，他所追求的是自我的徹底釋放與投射。醉狂導向"亂"，它表徵著的是醉者與內外秩序的對立。
>
> A person who is intoxicated attacks external objects and the external order; he seeks complete liberation and self-projection. Drunken madness is the result of intoxication, symbolizing the conflict between an intoxicated individual and both the internal mind and the external order.[76]

Li Bai 李白 (701–762),[77] whom Taixu acknowledges as one of the leading exponents of wine poetry,[78] is adept at conveying the essence of *zuikuang*—and the conflict it represents—as the following couplet demonstrates:

> 長風萬裏送秋雁，對此可以酣高樓。
>
> Gazing at geese flying thousands of miles on the autumn wind,
>
> Let us drink our fill in this high pavilion.[79]

In this poem, which Li Bai wrote during a feast to bid farewell to his uncle, Li Yun 李雲,[80] watching wild geese in the clear autumn sky prompts the poet to drink heartily and thus assume the persona of a heroic knight who has the courage to overcome the sorrow of parting. To him, in that moment, the only thing that matters is continuing to drink without restraint, with no concern for society's mores and expectations.

Over 1200 years later, Taixu attended a New Year's Eve feast. Again, the wine flowed freely, and Taixu was compelled to record the event in a poem that borrows some of Li Bai's imagery to similar effect:

> 酒氣跋鯨浪，琴聲落雁沙。
>
> The wine breath breaks through the waves like a leaping whale,
>
> The sound of the zither falls like geese landing on the beach.[81]

Although monastic disciplinary guidelines explicitly prohibit wine-drinking, even on festive occasions, Taixu subtly acknowledges that he himself was intoxicated that night. In his inebriated state, the wine appears like waves raised by a whale, while the zither sounds like geese landing on a beach. Hence, drinking alcohol seems to enhance Taixu's sensory perception, which in turn enables him to record what he witnessed in vivid poetic

imagery. In traditional Chinese culture, both whales and geese are symbols of freedom and unrestrained spirit—two more aspects of *zuikuang*.[82] Therefore, by drinking wine, Taixu becomes a daring knight–poet who transcends (monastic) discipline and order.

After the liberation of *zuikuang*, knights may transition into *zuiwo* 醉臥 (drunken rest), a form of self-reconciliation:

> 醉酒時安靜、內斂，並趨向與現實對立的醉鄉。醉臥打碎限制生命的種種界限，打通並實現天地萬物一體。
>
> [A person] who is intoxicated becomes tranquil and introverted, entering an intoxicated land that is the opposite of reality. Resting after intoxication allows one to overcome the many barriers imposed on one's life and achieve a holistic unity with the universe.[83]

This intoxicated land (*zuixiang* 醉鄉) is a dream-like state. After falling asleep to enter it, the knight turns inward, seeking freedom and unity, and thereby achieves reconciliation with himself and others (Gong 2022, p. 16). Wang Ji 王績 (585–644),[84] a poet who was active in the early years of the Tang dynasty, introduced the notion of *zuixiang*, which he characterized as a peaceful, serene haven where all worries are forgotten.[85] Therefore, the concept is similar to the Western idea of heaven (*xitian* 西天) (Gong 2022, p. 17). Knights in a state of *zuikuang* are too busy battling against the established order to attain inner tranquility or achieve self-reconciliation. However, *zuiwo* enables them to do both by granting them access to *zuixiang*. Taixu illustrates this point in a poem he composed in 1914:

> 萬古愁腸一杯酒，醉中吟苦不成詩。
>
> In the endless epochs, a cup of wine stirs the sorrows of my heart,
>
> Yet, amid intoxication, the bitter verses remain unsung.[86]

Taixu wrote this poem shortly before beginning his seclusion on Putuo Mountain. He had recently experienced a series of setbacks, including the death of one of his most beloved masters, Jing'an 敬安 (1852–1912).[87] His grief was so profound that he briefly considered abandoning his monastic career, but he managed to negotiate a path through this turbulent period by writing poetry and drinking wine (TDQ: XXXI: 188–189). Yet, in the depths of his loss and despair, he did not seek the wild excess of *zuikuang* but rather drank just enough to ease into *zuiwo* and enter *zuixiang*. Once in the intoxicated land, he found solace and managed to forget his worries and pain, like an exhausted knight after a battle.

Much of Taixu's *zuiwo* poetry can be traced back to the work of Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427),[88] the first Chinese poetic idyllist. During his seclusion, Taixu read many of Tao Qian's works and consciously imitated his poetic style (TDQ: XXXI: 193). Tao Qian drank wine every evening (*wu xi buyin* 無夕不飲) (Yuan 2003, p. 235), often becoming intoxicated, but remained sufficiently vigilant to avoid descending into *zuikuang* (Gong 2022, p. 16). Instead, he fell into the deep sleep of *zuiwo*, which in turn enabled him to compose the wine poetry that would inspire Taixu some 1500 years later.

Of course, even though poets can attain inner reconciliation in *zuixiang*, it should be remembered that this is not an actual place but rather a form of psychological anesthesia:

> 醉者內斂，安眠而不興奮，體段柔弱，雖可全身遠害，但卻失去了應有的血性。
>
> An intoxicated person is reserved, sleeping peacefully without excitement, and in a weak physical condition. It may protect the body from immediate harm, but it lacks essential vigor.[89]

Taixu's rejection of *zuikuang* in favor of *zuiwo* is strongly reflected in his poetry, where the focus shifts from external conflict to a state of inner calm. Rather than using whales and geese to symbolize his wine-induced, knightly boldness and recklessness, he starts to fill his poems with images that are more in keeping with the serenity of a hermit: that is, he transitions from wine imagery to tea imagery.

There has been a strong association between seclusion (*yinju* 隱居) and tea-drinking in Chinese literature for well over a thousand years. For example, the renowned Tang poet

Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842)[90] composed the following couplet after passing by a remote monastery:

客至茶煙起，禽歸講席收。

When guests arrive, tea steam rises.

Birds return, lecture mats are removed.[91]

Here, the rising tea steam and the absence of lecture mats indicate a tranquil, carefree atmosphere. Liu Yuxi provides no further details, so we do not know if the temple master and his guests subsequently entered into a discussion of the Buddha Dharma or simply engaged in a casual conversation about daily life, but there is no doubt that all those present were able to relax in this secluded place.

In a similar manner, Taixu uses tea steam to evoke a sense of ease and calm:

春風春雨訪伊人，半榻茶煙洗客塵；直到形骸忘盡後，清談一室豁天真。

Spring breeze and spring rain visit the beloved,

Half a couch, tea steam, cleansing travel dust;

Until body and form are forgotten,

Pure talk in the room with open-minded innocence.[92]

Once again, as in Liu Yuxi's verse, guests arrive at a master's abode, tea steam rises, and casual conversation ensues. The two poems' identical imagery reflect the joy their authors witnessed—and, in Taixu's case, personally experienced—in a secluded location. However, Taixu goes further than his famous predecessor by revealing that the ensuing conversation revolved around the Buddhist Dharma, as indicated by the phrases "pure talk" (*qingtan* 清談) and "innocence" (*tianzhen* 天真). Therefore, in addition to relishing the serenity provided by his physical seclusion, he attains spiritual transcendence through philosophical discussion.

The tea imagery in Taixu's poetry often carries another, deeper meaning by evoking the concept of *fa er rushi* 法爾如是 (Dharma is thus). Taixu explained this notion, which is integral to Chan Buddhism, in a 1930 lecture:[93]

佛學用"法爾如是"的道理(法就是諸法，統指一切事物)去解決人生宇宙究竟問題。法爾如是，就是說：諸法性相原來如此，還他如此。

Buddhist philosophy employs the principle of *fa er rushi* to address the ultimate questions of life and the universe. The term *fa* (Dharma) refers to all phenomena, encompassing everything. *Fa er rushi* essentially means that the inherent nature of all phenomena is just as it is and ultimately returns to its original state.[94]

Taixu conveys the essence of *fa er rushi* with reference to *Zhaozhou cha* 趙州茶 (*Zhaozhou Tea*), a popular Chan Buddhist *gong'an* 公案 dating from the Tang dynasty:[95]

趙州和尚見僧必問，到與未到。只曰吃茶去。院主問故。和尚呼院主，院主應之。亦曰吃茶去。

The Chan master Zhaozhou always asked the monks, "Have you been to [this place] or not?" [Regardless of how the monks responded,] he always said, "Go and drink tea." When the abbot asked him why he did this, Zhaozhou simply said the abbot's name. When the abbot responded [that he was listening], Zhaozhou once again stated, "Go and drink tea."[96]

When Master Zhaozhou 趙州 (778–897)[97] mentions "this place," he is not referring to his monastic residence but rather to the enlightened state that he and other monks can attain through Chan meditation. Regardless of whether his fellow monks have achieved enlightenment or are still seeking it, Zhaozhou tells them to "Go and drink tea." This highly influential *gong'an* reflects the Chan notion of "being the same, whether enlightened or not" (*wu liao hai tong wei wu shi* 悟了還同未悟時), which relates to the search for the essence of all phenomena.

Taixu employs *Zhaozhou cha* in his poetry to express his hope of returning to a state of *fa er rushi*:

妙喜泉水清，趙州茶味苦，試問嘗過人，能否將舌鼓?[98]

Miaoxi spring water is clear,[99]

Zhaozhou tea is bitter in flavor.

Ask anyone who has tasted it,

Will they shake their tongues?[100]

While Taixu considers tea bitter, he also appreciates its sweetness. Consequently, describing its flavor is challenging for him, so instead he focuses on the serenity the essence of tea provides. According to him, phenomena like the taste of tea are unimportant; he simply chooses to enjoy them peacefully, like a hermit.

Taixu's internal transformation from knight to hermit demonstrates that *zuiwo* can serve as a bridge between the meanings of wine and tea imagery. However, this is not to say that *zuiwo* imagery and tea imagery have the same meaning. Many Chinese poets, including Taixu, use *zuiwo* to evoke self-absorption (*ziwo xiaomo* 自我消磨), decadence, and obscurity (*tuimi zihui* 頹靡自晦) (Gong 2022, p. 11). Tea imagery is much more positive in comparison, as it often signifies seeking and attaining transcendence in seclusion or exploring the essence of all phenomena through Chan Buddhism. Additionally, tea reflects the poet's attainment of harmony with the outside world, which stands in marked contrast to the wine-induced conflict of *zuikuang*.

## 5. Wine and Tea: Striking a Balance between the Two Types of Imagery

Wine imagery, which is controversial in Buddhist literature, and tea imagery, which evokes health and serenity, are brought together in Taixu's poetry, as he is adept at utilizing both to create poems that are "not limited by fixed patterns to suit requirements" (*buju guchang yi shiying suoyi*不拘故常以適應所宜) (TDQ: XXXI: 201). When the two types of imagery coexist within the same poetic space, striking a balance between them becomes essential.

As a general rule, Taixu skillfully parallels wine imagery and tea imagery in two closely juxtaposed couplets, as in the following example:

三杯白酒忘身世，一卷黃庭養性靈。秋月滿軒吟菊頌，春風半席檢茶經。

Three cups of white wine, forgetful of worldly affairs,

One scroll of *Huangting jing* nourishes the spirit.

Autumn moon fills the pavilion, chanting a chrysanthemum hymn,

Spring breeze inspects *Cha jing* in the middle of a half-filled seat.[101]

In this poem, Taixu first consumes wine, which enables him to enter the restful state of *zuiwo* and forget the worries of the mundane world. Then he meditates in a pavilion surrounded by chrysanthemums, a poetic and beautiful setting for his seclusion. He studies two scriptures—the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (*Yellow Court Scripture*)[102] and the *Cha jing*—that are significant texts in Daoism and Chinese tea culture. The former is a foundational text in Daoist inner cultivation and medical principles, while the latter focuses on nature-oriented self-discipline and cultivation. In addition, they emphasize the importance of recuperation and a peaceful mind, both of which are strongly associated with tea-drinking in Taixu's poetry.

Taixu's interest in wine and tea imagery attracted the attention of many famous literati. For example, the renowned reporter Zhang Bingdu 張冰獨 (1915–1987)[103] interviewed Taixu on Yueya Mountain 月牙山 in Guilin 桂林, Guangxi Province 廣西省—an area renowned for its stunning landscape—shortly before the latter's death in 1947. His account of their meeting contains the following poetic passage:

半船明月，一席清風，酒浮標白，茶熟爐紅。

Half a boat bathed in moonlight, a seat embraced by a gentle breeze, wine ripples in the white cups, tea matures over the red stove.[104]

This evocative description is taken from an ancient stone carving entitled "Returning Home after Fishing" (*Diao ba guilai tu* 釣罷歸來圖).[105] There is no direct connection between the carving and Taixu, so it seems Zhang Bingdu chose to include it simply because he associated his interviewee so closely with wine and tea imagery.

As this ancient text demonstrates, Taixu was far from the first author to employ both types of imagery in his work. Indeed, literati have been attempting to strike a balance between the two beverages in their poems—and their lives—since the Tang dynasty (Benn 2015, p. 20). One notable example is Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846),[106] whom Taixu regarded as a significant poet (TDQ: II: 168). Although Bai Juyi never combined the two types of imagery in a single poem, he frequently used one or the other, as the following examples demonstrate:

绿蚁新醅酒，红泥小火炉。

[My] new wine emits a green glow,

My red clay stove flames up.[107]

食罷一覺睡，起來兩甌茶。

After the meal, [I] rest and sleep,

Awakening to two cups of tea.[108]

Whether it is wine brewing on the stove or the tea that he drinks after a nap, these beverages are clearly important elements in Bai Juyi's daily life. Similarly, in addition to his wine poetry (see above), Bai Juyi's predecessor Li Bai wrote the following verse after savoring a cup of tea:

朝坐有餘興, 長吟播諸天。

Sitting in the morning with lingering joy,

Long recitation, spreading across the heavens.[109]

Other renowned poets of the mid-Tang dynasty, such as Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737–791)[110] and Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852),[111] likewise utilized both wine and tea imagery in their work.[112]

Several centuries later, the most famous poet of the Song dynasty, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101),[113] admitted to drinking himself into a stupor to ease his anxiety:

不如眼前一醉,是非憂樂兩都忘。

Better to have immediate intoxication,

Forget both right and wrong, joy and sorrow.[114]

However, his beverage of choice at the end of the day was more likely to be a soothing cup of tea:

但願一甌常及, 睡足日高起。

I always hope to have a cup,

Sleep enough and rise with the sun.[115]

The wine and tea imagery of other Song poets, including Huang Tingjian 黃庭坚 (1045–1105)[116] and Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210),[117] is equally evocative, providing valuable insights into their daily lives.[118]

While all of these men are important figures in the history of Chinese literature, it is worth noting that Jiaoran 皎然 (730–799),[119] whom Taixu regards as the most outstanding poet–monk of the Tang dynasty (TDQ: XXXII: 414), rarely uses wine imagery in his work, and on one occasion explicitly states that he does not drink it himself.[120] Similarly, few, if any, of Taixu's monastic contemporaries shared his enthusiasm for the subject. The sole exception was the aforementioned Su Manshu, although it should be remembered that he was not a fully ordained monk. Moreover, in addition to his weakness for alcohol, he was the son of a tea merchant and consequently something of a connoisseur of that beverage too,[121] drinking it frequently both alone and with friends. Therefore, it is unsurprising that tea also features prominently in his work, appearing in no fewer than thirty poems.[122]

However, Su Manshu never thought to combine wine and tea imagery in a single poem. Rather, it was Taixu who took that innovative step, and in so doing set himself apart from all other poet—monks, both ancient and modern.

## 6. Conclusions

The intricate interweaving of wine and tea imagery in Taixu's poetry reflects the poet's complex personal relationships with the two beverages.

After a long evolutionary process, wine achieved unprecedented popularity in China during Taixu's lifetime. As a result, he had many opportunities to interact with it. He seemed to form his first—positive—impression of wine after hearing a group of elders discuss its beneficial effects. However, following his ordination in 1904, he consistently proclaimed his strong opposition to the consumption of alcohol on the grounds that it was not only detrimental to physical and mental health but also harmful to society—a point he reinforced during lectures with reference to a short list of simple Buddhist protocols known as the five precepts that were easily understood by monastics and laypeople alike. Yet, assuming his poetic accounts of wine-drinking can be taken at face value, he did not always follow the fifth protocol himself. In addition to being somewhat hypocritical, such behavior contravenes strict monastic disciplinary guidelines that permit the consumption of wine in certain circumstances but explicitly prohibit intoxication. Of course, it is possible that Taixu decided to incorporate wine-drinking in his poetry for artistic effect, but that does not explain why he presents himself as intoxicated, or indeed why he—alone among modern Chinese poet–monks—uses wine imagery so freely.

With regard to tea, Taixu is careful to distinguish between soup-like *ming* and clear, pure *cha*, referencing one or the other depending on the message he wants to convey. The latter beverage became an integral part of daily life in China in the first half of the 20th century, with many people, including Taixu, choosing to drink it as a more wholesome alternative to wine during festivals. Consequently, in his poetry, tea-drinking symbolizes his own pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, while preparation of the beverage—including careful selection of the leaves and clear water followed by patient brewing—represents meticulous study of the Buddha Dharma.

Therefore, whereas Taixu uses wine imagery to evoke the traditional knightly attributes of recklessness and freedom, his tea imagery symbolizes the laudable characteristics of devout hermits. Specifically, he employs the concept of drunken madness—*zuikuang*—to represent his own and others' conflicts with order and discipline. This chaotic state stands in marked contrast to the subsequent drunken rest of *zuiwo*, which allows entry into the intoxicated land—*zuixiang*—a peaceful realm where all worldly concerns are forgotten. Similar tranquility may be attained through hermitic seclusion from the outside world, which Taixu evokes through descriptions of tea steam rising during discussions between masters and their guests in monasteries. However, it should be noted that *zuiwo* and seclusion are not wholly synonymous: whereas the former is characterized by ongoing self-absorption and self-reflection, the latter leads to carefree ease and relaxation. Taixu also uses *Zhaozhou cha* to convey the essence of the important Chan Buddhist concept of *fa er rushi*, which stresses that everything ultimately returns to its original state.

Finally, Taixu is unique in presenting both wine and tea imagery in close proximity to one another within a single poem. In this respect, he differs from renowned ancient poets such as Bai Juyi and Su Shi as well as his own teacher and contemporary Su Manshu—all of whom produced wine poetry and tea poetry, but never a combination of the two. This significant innovation helped to bring Taixu to the attention of the wider literary world, with the result that he became modern China's most influential exponent of wine and tea poetry.

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| T | Taishō 大正藏; CBETA 2023.Q4 (Dec. 2023) |
| TDQ | Shi Taixu 釋太虛. *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書 (*Collected Works of Master Taixu*), 35 vols. Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher 宗教文化出版社, 2004. |
| X | Zoku zōkyō 續藏經; CBETA 2023.Q4 (Dec. 2023) |

## Notes

1 There are several important works dedicated to the study of Taixu. Welch (1968) is the first to present Taixu as a disingenuous self-promoter. Goodell (2008) sheds light on Taixu's seminal period of life and thoughts. Pittman (2001), Ritzinger (2017), and Jones (2021) focus on the relationship between *Mahāyāna* Buddhism and modern social reform and revolution in China.

2 X. Xu (2023) views Taixu as a poet monk and discusses his Buddhist thoughts and personal feelings using imagery. There is no other research on Taixu's poetry other than this study.

3 Taixu's grandmother, Zhou Lixiu 周理修, a knowledgeable practitioner of both Buddhism and Daoism, specialized in poetry (TDQ: XXXI: 156–57). His youngest uncle, Zhang Zigang 張子綱, was a talented literatus who was similarly well versed in Chinese poetry (ibid., pp. 159–60).

4 Taixu's personal poetry collection included approximately 500 works by mentors, associates, disciples, and students. A number of these works are dedicated to Taixu, and he collaborated on others. For additional information, see TDQ: XXXIV: 290–444.

5 *Meian Shilu* quickly garnered a wide readership, as is evident in the prefaces of the *Taixu dashi quanshu*, written by several of Taixu's fellow poets and friends (TDQ: XXXII: 510).

6 Yinshun was a renowned Buddhist philosopher who joined Taixu in the modern Buddhist revival movement in 1930. Throughout the rest of his life, he dedicated himself to promoting "humanistic Buddhism" (*renjain fojiao* 人間佛教), which encompassed many of the concepts and principles advocated by Taixu. For a more in-depth study of Yinshun, see Bingenheimer (2009).

7 Clouds and the moon are the most frequently used natural images in Taixu's poetry, appearing in more than 400 poems.

8 For a study of the lamps and candles in Taixu's poetry, see X. Xu (2023).

9 For the appearance of tea poetry during the Tang dynasty, see Benn (2015, p. 20).

10 For China's wine and tea studies, see Benn (2015) and Gong (2022).

11 For a history of tea-drinking in monasteries, see Liu (2006) and Benn (2015, pp. 81–82).

12 Rice wine was the most common form of alcohol in ancient China, not least because its quality improved and its strength increased over time. The typical alcohol content reached 12° during the Tang dynasty and 18° (close to the limit that can be achieved through fermentation) in the Song dynasty. It was still a popular drink in Taixu's lifetime. See https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_8433418 (accessed on 25 July 2020).

13 According to legend, Yu 禹, the founding emperor of the Xia dynasty, refused to consume wine, as he regarded it as harmful to society, saying: "In the future, there will inevitably be individuals who will destroy their nation through wine" 後世必有以酒亡其國者 (Gong 2022, p. 12).

14 *Mūlasarvâstivāda-vinaya-kārikā*, T24, no. 1459, p. 643a18–21. This is a summarized compilation of the *gāthā*s (*jisong* 偈頌) of the *Mūlasarvâstivāda* (*Genben shuo yiqie youbu* 根本說一切有部) *vinaya* by Vaiśākhyā 毘舍佉.

15 There is evidence of wine distillation in China as far back as the Yuan 元 dynasty (1271–1368), but it was not commonplace until the 20th century.

16 See (Li et al. 2018).

17 There are now three major wine-producing provinces in China: Jiangsu 江蘇, Zhejiang, and Guangdong 廣東. See http://www.cnjiuzhi.com/baike/9628.html (accessed on 8 June 2016).

18 Taixu, *Yuzhou zhenxiang* 宇宙真相 (*The Truth of the Universe*), TDQ: XXIII: 111.

19 *Xianglao* are elderly villagers with exemplary morals.

20 *Zongjiao* refers to the period of childhood between the ages of eight and fourteen. The term dates back to ancient times, when young children's hair was fashioned into two top knots.

21 The Tiantong Monastery, a Chan temple in Ningbo 寧波, Zhejiang Province, was built during the Western Jin dynasty.

22 Taixu, *Pusa xue chu jiangyao* 菩薩學處講要 (*Essentials of Bodhisattva Studies*), TDQ: XVIII: 256.

23 The Yanqing Temple, established during the Five Dynasties 五代 (902–979) period and renovated across successive dynasties, is a famous Buddhist temple and lecture venue.

24 Taixu, *Pusa xue chu jiangyao*, TDQ: XVIII: 255.

25 In the *Upāsaka-śīla-sūtra*, the Buddha explains the bodhisattva precepts to an elderly layman (*shansheng zhangzhe* 善生長者). His explanation outlines eight types of precept for bodhisattva laypeople and six for regular laypeople.

26 The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* is a commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Da bore jing* 大般若經). Grounded in the *Mādhyamika-kārikā* (*Zhonglun* 中論), it emphasizes the doctrine of emptiness.

27 The *Fenbie Shan'e Baoying Jing* discusses cause and effect and distinguishes between the karmic consequences of good and evil.

28 That said, Taixu acknowledges that including alcohol consumption within the five precepts may seem overly strict (TDQ: XVIII: 256). This is because the first four precepts are considered *xingjie* 性戒—fundamental moral and practice standards for monastics and lay Buddhists alike—whereas wine-drinking is classified as a less serious *zhejie* 遮戒 (T1459, no. 24, p. 638c19). The latter are actions that, while not inherently contrary to moral norms, are deemed problematic within particular societal or cultural contexts. Hence, laypeople are usually advised to avoid them, rather than explicitly forbidden from engaging in them.

29 Taixu, *Dazeng laoai* 答贈老愛 (*Response Poem for an Old Friend*), TDQ: XXXIV: 242.

30 *Laoai* usually refers to a spouse, but in this poem, it refers to a close friend.

31 *Dharmaguptaka vinaya*, T22, no. 1428, p. 672b16–17.

32 (Benn 2015, p. 58).

33 Chen Songluo, a famous poet born in Shaoxing 紹興, Zhejiang Province, often collaborated with Taixu.

34 *Babi* 把臂 refers to holding each other's arms, indicating intimacy or trust between two people.

35 Yuezhong 越中 is the ancient name of Shaoxing.

36 Taixu, *Meian shilu xu* 昧盦詩錄序 (*Preface to The Poetry Collection of Meian*), TDQ: XXXII: 514.

37 Taixu is recognized as one of the four eminent monks (*si da gaoseng* 四大高僧) of the Republic of China, alongside Xuyun, Yinguang, and Hongyi.

38 For example, wine is mentioned in Xuyun's poem *Die songgu shuiniao shulin chang shuofa* 疊頌古水鳥樹林常說法 (*Refrain: Rivers, Flying Birds, and Forests Often Perceive the Dharma*) (Jinghui 2009, pp. 67–70) and Hongyi's poem *Songbie* 送別 (*Farewell*) (Hongyi 2017, p. 54).

39 Su Manshu taught Taixu English while the latter was studying at the Jetavana Hermitage in 1909 (TDQ: XXXI: 181). For further information on his life, see Shao (2013, pp. 1–24) and Tan (2020).

40 Su Manshu, *Wumen yi Yisheng yun* 吳門依易生韻 (*Poetry in Wumen Following the Verse Rhyme of Mr. Yi*) (Shao 2013, p. 103). Wumen 吳門 is Suzhou; Yisheng 易生 (Mr. Yi) is Shen Yimei 沈一梅, Su's colleague and friend.

41 According to Nan Huaijin 南懷瑾 (1918–2012), Su Manshu was perceived as a monk while begging for alms in a temple in Guangzhou 廣州and subsequently obtained the ordination license of a dead monk. See Nan (2003, p. 433).

42 Lu Yu, an orphan adopted by monks during the Tang dynasty, made a significant contribution to tea culture in China. He was revered as the "sage of tea" (*chasheng* 茶聖) and worshiped as the "god of tea" (*chashen* 茶神). For more information on both Lu Yu and the *Cha jing*, see Benn (2015, pp. 96–116).

43 Lu Yu, "Liu zhi yin" 六之飲 (Six: Tea-Drinking), Lu and Song (2017, p. 41). Translation is based on Benn (2015, p. 9).

44 For further information on Pi Rixiu's life and works, see (X. Sun 2019).

45 Pi Rixiu, *Chazhong zayong bing xu* 茶中雜詠並序 (*Tea Poems and a Preface*), Pi (1981, p. 163).

46 *Wutian* 五天 (the five celestials) is the name given to the five devas in the northeast of the *Garbhadhātu maṇḍala*.

47 Chatting while resting under the eaves is a common theme in Chinese poetry. For example, Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140–1207), a famous poet of the Southern Song dynasty 南宋, describes a relaxing scene: "The thatched roof slants low/Beside the brook green grasses grow./Who talks with drunken southern voice to please/White-haired man and wife at their ease" 茅簷低小，溪上青青草。醉裏吳音相媚好，白髮誰家翁媼. See *Qing ping yue: Cunju* 清平乐·村居 (*Pure Serene Music: Village Living*) (Xin and Deng 2018, p. 210).

48 Taixu, *Fan Yu hou Chen Zhenru zeng shi yi yun da zhi* 返渝後陳真如贈詩依韻答之 (*Chen Zhenru Presents Me with a Poem after I Return to Chongqing, and I Respond in Kind*), TDQ: XXXIV: 221. Chen Mingshu 陳銘樞 (1889–1965), courtesy name Zhenru 真如, was a senior Nationalist Party military officer and a devout Buddhist.

49 Taixu, *Su Xiaojun wenquan lüguan* 宿小郡溫泉旅館 (*An Overnight Stay at a Small Hotel in Ogori*), TDQ: XXXIV: 88. Ogori is a city in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan.

50 Wang (2000) provides additional information on China's tea houses in the 20th century.

51 See https://www.sohu.com/a/319844678_120101881 (accessed on 18 June 2019).

52 The *Qing bai lei chao* is a key text in the study of late imperial cultural and literary history. The compiler, Xu Ke, was an editor at the Commercial Press 商務印書館, China's first modern publishing house. He also wrote a number of books. See J. Xie (1983) for further information on his life and works.

53 Xu Ke, "Chasi pincha" 茶肆品茶 (Tea Tasting at Tea Houses) (K. Xu 1984, pp. 6317–18).

54 For further information on traditional Chinese dining etiquette, see (Zhao 2021).

55 Huanglong tea 黃龍茶 is produced near snow-capped mountains in the southern part of the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau. Its roots have medicinal properties, and drinking the tea is believed to clear heat and relieve internal fire.

[56] Taixu, *Guiwei Chongjiu zai Jinyun lianju* 癸未重九在縉雲聯句 (*In the Year of Guiwei, the Double Ninth Festival, Collaborative Verses at Jinyun*), TDQ: XXXIV: 228.

[57] Jinyun Mountain, in Chongqing 重慶, is named for the white clouds that surround it. Uniquely in China, the mountain's Jinyun Temple 縉雲寺is dedicated to the Buddha's disciple Kāśyapa 迦葉.

[58] The Double Ninth Festival is a traditional Chinese folk festival. Historically, it involved climbing mountains, worshiping gods and ancestors, and participating in feasts for longevity.

[59] Wang Fu 王敷 was a provincial official who lived at the end of the Tang dynasty. His text contains extensive analysis of wine and tea, including their respective merits and shortcomings.

[60] The manuscript was discovered in one of the Mogao caves at Dunhuang on 22 June 1900.

[61] Wang Fu, *Cha Jiu Lun*, in (Xiang 2006, pp. 574–75).

[62] Lu Tong lived in seclusion in his early years before moving to Luoyang 洛陽. However, after arriving in the capital, he still did not wish to serve as an official and maintained a humble lifestyle. He was known as the "tea immortal" (*chaxian* 茶仙) on account of his passion for the beverage. See (Y. Sun 2013, pp. 294–97) for further information on his life.

[63] Here, Lu Tong suggests that tea-drinking aids literary composition. Of course, "five thousand scrolls" should not be taken literally; rather, it simply symbolizes his prolific output.

[64] Lu Tong, *Zoubi xie Meng jianyi ji xincha* 走筆謝孟諫議寄新茶 (*Expressing Gratitude to Jianyi Meng for Sending Me New Tea*), in (Peng 2013, p. 4392). A *jianyi* 諫議 (censor) was a senior supervisory official.

[65] Taixu, *Xuedou si ba yong* 雪竇寺八詠 (*Eight Poems for the Xuedou Temple*), TDQ: XXXIV: 119–120. He composed this poem in 1921, during his stay at the Chan Buddhist Xuedou Monastery 雪竇寺 on Xuedou Mountain 雪竇山, Ningbo, which houses the ashram of Maitreya, the so-called "laughing Buddha".

[66] Bamboo-tube water diversion involves connecting a series of long bamboo tubes to channel spring water from high mountain caves to locations where it is needed for irrigation or drinking. The technique is still commonplace in the mountainous regions of southern China.

[67] Taixu, *Taoguang fang Li Jingyuan ci Taoguang chanshi yun* 韜光訪李圓淨次韜光禪師韻 (*Visiting Monk Li Yuanjing at the Taoguang Temple, Composed in the Rhythm of Chan Master Taoguang*), TDQ: XXXIV: 129. Taoguang 韜光, a renowned Tang dynasty monk, constructed Taoguang Temple 韜光寺on Lingyin Mountain 靈隱山. Li Yuanjing 李圓淨 (1894–1950) was a disciple of Master Yinguang.

[68] Taixu, *Xu Yushan Qianbu sha wantiao shi qiyun* 續昱山千步沙晚眺詩七韻 (*Continuing the Evening Gaze at Qianbu Sha of Yushan: Seven Rhymes*), TDQ: XXXIV: 27. Yushan 昱山 was Taixu's closest and most supportive friend (TDQ: XXXIII: 296). Qianbu sha 千步沙 is Putuo Mountain's largest beach.

[69] Taixu, *Xin miao chang* 新妙場 (*New Marvelous Ground*), TDQ: XXXIV: 225.

[70] Taixu, *Fenghuang tai shang yi chuixiao* 鳳凰臺上憶吹簫 (*Playing Flute Recalled on the Phoenix Terrace*), TDQ: XXXIV: 274.

[71] Taixu delivered this three-day lecture in response to an invitation from Huang Jiheng 黃季蘅, a prominent figure in Huangmei 黃梅. In addition, he composed five poems that commemorated his visit to the town. See (Yinshun 2011, pp. 105–6).

[72] Taixu, *Fofa zhi jiaoli xing guo* 佛法之教理行果 (*The Doctrine, Activity and Effect of Buddhist Teaching*), TDQ: XXVI: 110.

[73] Chen Jiru was a distinguished painter, calligrapher, and author. During his lifetime, he repeatedly declined imperial summonses, instead choosing a life of seclusion in which he blended aspects of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. For a full overview of his life and philosophy, see (Greenbaum 2007).

[74] See (Cheng 2016, p. 186).

[75] It is believed this festival dates back to the Xia dynasty, when it was known as the *Qingsi* 清祀. See (Wang and Zhang 2019, p. 688).

[76] (Gong 2022, p. 11).

[77] Li Bai, the most renowned romantic poet of the Tang dynasty, is celebrated as both the "poetic immortal" (*shixian* 詩仙) and the "wine immortal" (*jiuxian* 酒仙). His poems exhibit a unique imagination and a majestic style. See Zhan (2019) for an overview of studies of the poet's life and work.

[78] Taixu acclaims Li Bai's work as the pinnacle of wine poetry: 詩酒李白尊. See *Sichuan ge* 四川歌 (*The Poetry of Sichuan*), TDQ: XXXIV: 160–61.

[79] Li Bai, *Xuanzhou Xietiao lou jianbie jiaoshu shu yun* 宣州謝眺樓餞別校書叔雲 (*Farewell to Uncle Yun, Imperial Librarian, at Xie Tiao Pavilion on Xuanzhou*), in (Peng 2013, p. 1814). The Xie Tiao Pavilion 謝眺樓 is named after the renowned scholar Xie Tiao 謝眺 (464–499), prefect of Xuancheng 宣城 during the Southern and Northern dynasties. A *jiaoshu* 校書 was an ancient Chinese official who corrected and compared texts.

[80] Li Bai's paternal uncle Li Yun (also known as Li Hua 李華) was an accomplished prosaist and calligrapher.

[81] Taixu, *Chuxi ting tanqin bing guan haoyin* 除夕聽彈琴並觀豪飲 (*New Year's Eve: Listening to the Zither and Observing Boisterous Libations*), TDQ: XXXIV: 239–240.

[82] For further information on the symbolic meanings of whales and geese in Chinese culture, see (Hall 2018, pp. 27, 52).

83 (Gong 2022, p. 11).

84 The heavy drinker Wang Ji describes pastoral landscapes and his own leisurely lifestyle in a fresh, simple style that contributed greatly to the development of Tang poetry.

85 Wang Ji provided a detailed description of *zuixiang*, including the imaginary realm's topography and living conditions. See *Zuixiang ji* 醉鄉記 (*Record of the Intoxicated Land*) (Wang and Xia 2016, pp. 221–24).

86 Taixu, *Zeng Li Dazhi* 贈李大治 (*The Gift Poem for Li Dazhi*), TDQ: XXXIV: 48–49.

87 Taixu had great respect for Jing'an, the principal preceptor at his ordination ceremony (TDQ: XXXI: 167). For further information on Taixu's troubles prior to 1914, see TDQ: XXXI: 188–192 and (Yinshun 2011, pp. 45–46).

88 Tao Qian (also known as Tao Yuanming 陶淵明), a highly influential literatus during the Eastern Jin 東晉dynasty, is widely regarded as the progenitor of the ancient Chinese recluse poets. For further information on his life and impact, see (Swartz 2008, pp. 1–22).

89 (Gong 2022, p. 21).

90 Liu Yuxi is celebrated as a "poetic giant" (*shihao* 詩豪). His poetry is distinguished by its depth, subtlety, and optimism. For further information on his life, philosophy, and work, see (Bian 1996).

91 Liu Yuxi, *Qiuri guo Hongju fashi siyuan, bian songgui Jiangling* 秋日過鴻舉法師寺院，便送歸江陵 (*Passing by the Temple of Hongju on an Autumn Day, Bidding Farewell and Returning to Jiangling*), (Liu and Qu 1989, pp. 956–57).

92 Taixu, *Chunfeng waqu liushou* 春風蛙曲六首 (*Six Poems on Spring Breezes and Croaking Frogs*), TDQ: XXXIV: 255–256.

93 Taixu delivered this lecture at the School of Foreign Literature, Sichuan University (*Sichuan daxue* 四川大學), in November 1930.

94 Taixu, *Foxue de xianshi lun* 佛學的現實論 (*The Reality Theory of Buddhist Studies*), TDQ: XXIII: 137.

95 A *gong'an* usually begins with the presentation of a story sourced from classical texts, teaching records, or hagiographies of Tang and Song Chan masters. A question is then posed concerning a key phrase (*huatou* 話頭) in the story that seemingly contradicts either an accepted Buddhist position or everyday logic.

96 *Jing zhong jing you jing* 徑中徑又徑 (*Paths within Paths Again*), X62, no. 1185, p. 385b5–7. Compiled by Zhang Shicheng 張師誠 (1762–1830), a layman of the late Qing dynasty, the *Jing zhong jing you jing* contains various discussions of the Pure Land.

97 Zhaozhou (ordination name Congshen 從諗) is an important figure in Chan history. He was given this name because he spent most of his teaching career at the Guanyin Monastery 觀音院 in Zhaozhou 趙州.

98 *Gushe* 鼓舌 refers to moving (or shaking) the tongue in response to the taste of delicious food or drink.

99 According to Taixu, tea made with Miaoxi spring 妙喜泉 water is a specialty of the Ayuwang (Aśoka) Monastery 阿育王寺, Ningbo, which was founded during the Western Jin dynasty 西晉 (266–316).

100 Taixu, *Ti Ayuwang si shier jing* 題阿育王寺十二景 (*Inscription of the Twelve Scenes at Ayuwang Monastery*), TDQ: XXXIV: 68–69.

101 Taixu, *Huai Danning daozhang* 懷澹寧道丈 (*Recalling Dao Master Danning*), TDQ: XXXIV: 33. Danning 澹寧 refers to Wang Zhaoquan 汪兆銓 (1858–1928), a close friend of Taixu.

102 *Huangting jing*, a major Daoist scripture that is particularly associated with the Shangqing 上清 tradition, provides instructions for practitioners to regulate and improve their bodily functions. See (Kohn 2023) for an English translation.

103 Zhang Bingdu, a journalist and editor of several Shanghai newspapers with a flair for promotion, was known as the "propaganda minister on Nanjing Road" (*Nanjing lu shang de xuanchuan buzhang* 南京路上的宣傳部長). For further information on his life and work, see (Hu 2007, pp. 15–31).

104 Zhang Bingdu, *Taixu dashi fangwen ji* 太虛大師訪問記 (*Record of Visiting Master Taixu*), TDQ: XXX: 371.

105 In his article, Zhang Bingdu explains that he came across the inscription en route to his appointment with Taixu. He speculates that the stone probably once contained a now-invisible visual image of the scene as well as the poem.

106 The poems of Bai Juyi, a lay Buddhist who studied the Jingtu School 淨土宗, are widely admired for their clarity and accessibility. See (Shigeo and Wang 2019) for a study of his work.

107 Bai Juyi, *Wen Liu Shijiu* 問劉十九 (*Inviting Liu Shijiu*), in (S. Xie 2006, pp. 1358–59). Liu Shijiu 劉十九, a native of Songyang 嵩陽, was a close friend of Bai Juyi.

108 Bai Juyi, *Shihou* 食後 (*After Eating*), in (S. Xie 2006, pp. 639–40).

109 Li Bai, *Da zuzhi seng Zhongfu zeng Yuquan xianrenzhang cha* 答族侄僧中孚贈玉泉仙人掌茶 (*Response to My Nephew, Monk Zhongfu, Regarding the Gift of Yuquan Cactus Tea*), in (Peng 2013, p. 1823). Yuquan refers to Mount Yuquan 玉泉山 in Dangyang 當陽, Hubei 湖北 Province. This is the earliest known poem to mention a particular type of tea by name.

110 The serene and tranquil poems of Wei Yingwu contain evocative descriptions of landscapes and reclusion.

111 The poetry of Du Mu is both elegant and unrestrained. See Fishlen (1994) and Hong (2019) for detailed studies of his life and work.

112 See, for example: Wei Yingwu's wine poem *Ji Quanjiao shan zhong daoshi* 寄全椒山中道士 (*A Poem to a Taoist Hermit on Quanjiao Mountain*) (W. Sun 2002, pp. 363–64) and his tea poem *Xi yuanzhong cha sheng* 喜園中茶生 (*Joy at Seeing Tea Growing in the Garden*)

(ibid., p. 350); and Du Mu's wine poem *Qianhuai* 遣懷 (*A Confession*) (Du and Wu 2013, p. 695) and his tea poem *Ti cha shan* 題茶山 (*Inscription on Tea Mountain*) (ibid., pp. 204–5).

113 Su Shi (also known as Dongpo jushi 東坡居士) was a prominent literary figure, statesman, and artist during the Northern Song dynasty. His artistic achievements encompass essays, poetry, *ci* 詞 (lyric poetry), and *fu* 賦 (rhymed prose) as well as calligraphy and painting. See (Wang and Cui 2019) for further information on his life.

114 Su Shi, *Bao bao jiu* 薄薄酒 (*Mild Wine*), in (Zhang et al. 2010, pp. 1400–3).

115 Su Shi, *Shiyuan jiancha* 試院煎茶 (*Tea Brewing at the Examination Institute*), in (Zhang et al. 2010, pp. 734–38).

116 Huang Tingjian, a poet and calligrapher during the Northern Song dynasty, was the founder of the Jiangxi Poetry School (*Jiangxi shipai* 江西詩派) and a follower of both Buddhism and Daoism. He advocated utilizing the phrases and sentences of ancient poets to achieve innovation in his own work. For further information on his life and work, see (B. Huang 1998).

117 Lu You (courtesy name Fangweng 放翁) was an important literary figure during the Southern Song dynasty. He uses simple, clear language in a meticulous, disciplined poetic structure. For a general overview of his life, see (Zhu 2007).

118 See, for example: Huang Tingjian's wine poem *Ji Huang Jifu* 寄黃幾複 (*Sending a Poem to Huang Jifu*) (T. Huang 2001, p. 155) and his tea poem *Pinling Chaci* 品令·茶詞 (*Appreciating Characters: Tea Verses*) (ibid., p. 350); and Lu You's wine poem *Duijiu* 對酒 (*Drinking Wine*) (Lu and Qian 1985, p. 533) and his tea poem *Shicha* 試茶 (*Tea Tasting*) (ibid., p. 525).

119 Jiaoran, a close friend of Lu Yu, not only enjoyed drinking tea but claimed to have attained enlightenment through three cups of tea (*sanbei dedao* 三杯得道). After failing the imperial examination on several occasions in his youth, he withdrew from public life and became a monk at the Miaoxi Monastery 妙喜寺, Huzhou 湖州. Thereafter, his elegant writing style earned him the epithet the "great Buddhist vessel" (*shimen weiqi* 釋門偉器) (T50, no. 2061, p. 891c27).

120 "[I], the mountain monk, despite not drinking wine / Offer wine, inviting Tao Qian to join" 山僧雖不飲，酤酒引陶潛. See Jiaoran, *Zhao Han Wu Kang Zhang* 招韓武康章 (*A Poem to Han Wu and Kang Zhang*), in (Peng 2013, p. 9277).

121 Su Manshu's father, Su Jiesheng 蘇傑生, owned a tea business in Yokohama for over twenty years. See (Shao 2013, p. 3).

122 See http://www.fjbcw.com/news_view.asp?851 (accessed on 7 August 2012).

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