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From the Role to the Function: Exploring the Meanings of the Tea Culture of Chinese Ethnic Minorities

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Abstract

Chinese tea culture has increasingly become a favored hot study subject at home and abroad. Through an in-depth systematic exploration of the literature on the tea culture of China's ethnic minorities, this paper offers insight into its role and functions in the life and customs of contemporary China's ethnic minorities. A content-based analysis methodology is adopted to demonstrate the panoramic past and present tea culture. The study finds that tea plays a significant and irreplaceable role in the economic and social life of China's ethnic minorities, which are the birthplace of Chinese tea culture. The functions of tea drinking of ethnic minorities take shape under the interaction of extensive economic and cultural exchanges among various ethnic groups. This paper addresses the practical functions and values of tea culture so that China should strengthen the inheritance, development, and utilization of the excellent traditional culture of all ethnic groups, including tea culture, to be carried forward and produce economic benefits. It is of great practical significance to promote economic and cultural development under the tea culture of ethnic groups outside China. An ethnological and ethnographic exploration in the paper sheds some light on understanding Chinese tea culture and its contribution to the world culture, such as tea production, making, serving, and appreciation in the Chinese context.

Keywords: Tea Culture; Ethnic Minorities; Tea-Drinking Customs

Introduction

China is the homeland of tea, and drinking tea is the traditional custom of the Chinese people. Tea has accompanied people throughout their lives and is the “national drink” in China. The Chinese nation has created a splendid tea culture in its long history. Drinking tea makes people think more and sleep less, lights their bodies and eyesight, and helps people with self-cultivation. In other words, tea is a part of the quintessence of the Chinese cultural landscape. The CiteSpace visualization analysis on the keywords of research on tea from 2002 to 2023 reveals the cutting-edge hotspots in developing the domestic tea industry (Tan & Wu, 2024). Compared with the tea culture of the Han nationality, tea types, tea making, and drinking customs have distinct regional roles (Deng & Ge, 2016), for instance, a parallel cultural perception of tea and women (Ma, 2024, 7), the embodiment of “Marxist philosophy” in tea culture (Meng, 2024, 14), a logical system constructed for ethnic minority tea culture through dimensions such as “harmony, symbiosis, ecology, and happiness” (Yang, 2020, 117).

Recently, some scholastic findings have shifted from its primary roles to its practical functions: the application of tea culture in ancient society and its “modern significance” (Kang, 2023, 246), Apo Tea for the reconstruction of the “public cultural space” of traditional villages and the revival

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of conventional culture (Xu, 2025, 8), “Tea Banquet” as a symbolic space of cultural halls and rural communities (Xi, 2023, 112). In the exchange and integration of ethnic culture and customs, the tea culture has constructed a building for the production, life, social economy, and ecological survival of various ethnic groups, promoting the sense of community of the Chinese nation through tea culture (Shu, 2024, 11) and “the common values among the Chinese nation” (Chen, 2024, 23).

Tea drinking also has the function of making friends near and afar and enhancing friendships. Serving tea to guests has become a virtue of the Chinese nation. A global recognition of Chinese tea culture will be established soon (Chen, 2024). The fragrance and charm of tea showcase the style of great power leaders and the cultural way of national communication, truly demonstrating “China’s characteristic diplomacy” in the new era (Zhan & Cui, 2024, 3). The tea-drinking customs of various ethnic groups in contemporary China “share beauties, and the unity of the world” (Huang, 2018, 167), for the tea has become a bridge for communication, reconciling the contradictions between human and society, human and nature, and human and humanity, and connecting tea with the world” (Lai, 2024, 8). For instance, Da Cha and Naoyuan Tea as shared tea in cultural exchanges between China and South Korea and even among East Asian nations (Li & Song, 2024, 195), archaeological evidence of the spread of tea drinking customs to the north and west, between Asian and European cultures (Shan, 2024, 28-29; Liu, 2024, 196). The Tea and Horse Ancient Road is highly consistent with the “Belt and Road Initiative” (Wang, 2018, 140). Thus, it is promising for the internationalization of tea culture, showcasing its charm through cultural exchange activities and enhancing international market awareness (Li & Zhang, 2025, 8).

Based on a systematic review of the literature on the roles and the functions of tea among China’s ethnic minorities, this paper expounds on the functional tea drinking customs, the present life and conventions in comparison with those of the passing days, with complementary information of historical figures in Chinese tea culture. A series of ethnic minorities are paralleled to give prominence to their unique conventions and conveniences related to their tea cultures. A profound content-based analysis is conducted to explore the meaning of the tea culture of Chinese ethnic minorities. It was decided to search online journals and dissertations for articles related to Chinese tea culture. Since the authors were not satisfied with a sample number of 39 articles from those agriculture and food-related journals, they added three additional publications, i.e., *China Cooperation Times*, *China Daily*, and *China Daily Overseas Editions*, bringing the total research sample to 80 articles, while selecting 46 ones prioritizing their recent publication date, reliable written length and varied paper types.

The researchers studied a broad variety of categories of Chinese tea culture: tea in history, tea in literature, tea in life, tea in ties, tea in trade, tea in tourism, etc. According to their abstracts concerning authors, authors’ affiliations, number of pages of each article, country of the journal’s origin, date of publication, and whether the research method used is vertical or horizontal, with an attempt to combine the categorization of each article, these categories mentioned above were narrowed down to two broader categories: (1) the role of tea in the life and customs of ethnic minorities, for instance, “San Pao Tai” and “Pot Tea” of the Hui ethnic group, the Tibetan Ghee Tea, the oil tea of the Dong ethnic group. (2) the function of tea drinking customs of ethnic minorities, for instance, fragrant tea of the Uygur ethnic group, salty milk tea of the Kazak ethnic group and Mongolian, the Naxi ethnic group’s “dragon and tiger” tea, bamboo tube fragrant tea of Lahu and Dai ethnic groups, Blang ethnic group’s sour tea and pot-cap tea, the Miao ethnic

group's Popo tea and insect tea, Sandao tea of the Bai ethnic group, and wheat tea and kernels tea of the Salar ethnic group. It states that drinking, tasting, or eating tea is a daily dietary behavior.

However, this eating behavior has continuously been integrated into national emotion and psychology throughout history. It also points out that tea has constantly become the carrier of spiritual and psychological factors, such as aesthetic emotion, ethical concepts, spiritual enjoyment, etc. Through various external forms of national tea culture, people can experience the core spirit of national tea culture. Similarly, from the tea culture of each ethnic group, people can also be familiar with and feel the different roles and functions of each ethnic group. It deserves our primary attention to the critical position of the ethnic minorities, which are the birthplace of Chinese tea culture, stressing the groundbreaking contribution of the tea culture of ethnic minorities to the world culture. The following context is elaborated on the primary role of tea in the life and customs of Chinese ethnic minorities, for instance, to appease the body, to nourish the soul, or to refresh the mind. Moreover, the systematic functions of the tea are explored ethnologically and ethnographically. It addresses the shifts from its role to function, convention to convenience, and private to public, benefiting from one to all.

Minority Areas as the Birthplace of China's Tea Culture

China's ethnic minorities are mainly concentrated in the western region, especially in the southwest. Southwest primarily refers to the three provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, and Sichuan, the world's earliest discovery, use, and cultivation of tea trees. According to historical data, as early as more than 1700 years ago, in southwest minority residential areas, there are wild tea tree records. In 1961, in the thick forest of Daheishan in Bada, Menghai County, Yunnan Province, researchers found a wild tea tree 32.12 meters high and 2.9 meters in diameter. It was estimated that the tree was about 1,700 years old. In Menghai County, Nannuo Shanhuan, there is a big tea tree. The legend of the local Hani people says that this tea tree has been planted for 55 generations and has a history of more than 800 years. It is called the King of Tea locally. In Qianjia Village, Heping Township, Jiujiu District, Zhenyuan County, Simao region, Yunnan, a sizeable wild tea tree community was found up to thousands of mu. In addition to Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Hunan, and other places, ancient tea trees were also found. These wild tea trees can be described as the giant tea trees in the world, which is also strong evidence that tea trees originated from ethnic minority areas in southern China (Chen, 1992).

Of course, the origin of ancient wild tea trees does not mean that tea culture originated from this, so when and where did tea drinking begin? According to historical records, the tea-drinking culture of China's ethnic minorities was formed as early as the Shennong era. Therefore, the discovery and use of tea in China should have started from the primitive matriarchal society at least five thousand years ago. In Chinese folklore, Shennong, who tasted hundreds of herbs and knew tea, should be said to be the representative of the primitive peoples in the prehistoric south. Shennong's tablet is still in the ancestral shrine, the "hall for the elderly," in Wenshan, Yunnan. Yang Wanjuan, a scholar who studies the tea culture of Ethnic minorities in China, believes that tea as a drink has a long process of consumption, medicinal use, and drinking. This evolution process is still completely retained in the tea-drinking customs of ethnic minorities (Yang, 1999).

In primitive societies, the first need for human survival was to find food. People found wild tea trees and fresh leaves as food to appease hunger. In ancient Chinese literature, there are records of tea as a portion of food that can cure hunger. Jinuo people in Jinghong County, Xishuangbanna,

Yunnan Province, keep eating cool tea. The method of eating is almost consistent with the literature records. The Jinuo people first crush the fresh leaves to remove their bitterness, add salt, garlic, pepper, and other spices, wash them in cold water, and serve them as dishes. When primitive man discovered tea had a medical effect on the human body, humans treated tea with particular respect. *Shennong Bencao Jing*, the first Chinese medicinal monograph, recorded the origin and efficacy of tea. Later, herbologists and medical scientists of all dynasties discussed tea as a good medicine for disease prevention and health care (Li, 2003).

It is recorded in Chinese medical books that tea is used as medicine. For example, Zhang Zhongjing (around 150~154—215~219), a medical scientist in the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.—220 A.D.), has a record in his *Miscellany of Typhoid Diseases* that treating pus and blood with tea is very effective. In the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644), Li Shizhen (1518—1593) wrote in his *Compendium of Materia Medical* that tea is bitter and cold and can best reduce inflammation. However, the earliest records of medicinal tea prescription are from the Three Kingdoms period (220—280), when Zhang Yi (birth and death unknown) wrote *Guangya*. The book describes how diseases are cured by drinking tea from the ancient minorities in western Hubei to northern Sichuan. Today, Miao, Yao, Dong, Zhuang, and Tujia ethnic groups living in west Hubei, western Hunan, and north Guangxi widely used oil tea, which is very similar to the practice of tea drinking described in the *Guangya* (Yang, 1999).

It is indisputable that the Chinese tea industry arose in southwest minority areas. In the early Western Zhou Dynasty (1046—771 B. C.), when the vast central China Plains did not know what tea was, the ethnic minorities in southwest China took tea as tribute and a drink. As a result, tea eventually developed into a public drink from appeasing food, health care, and medicine, and people's demand for tea increased, according to the research of Gu Yanwu (1613—1682), a famous scholar in the late Ming (1368—1644) and early Qing dynasties (1616—1912), tea drinking spread from the southwest to central China after Qin Shi Huang (259—210 B.C., the First Emperor of Qin) annexed Sichuan. According to historical records, Chengdu (the capital of Sichuan) in the southwest had become the consumption center of Chinese tea and the earliest tea distribution center in the Western Han Dynasty (202 B.C.—8 A.D.) (Chen & Lü, 2000).

To sum up, southwest China, where China's ethnic minorities live in compact communities, is where wild tea trees grow at the earliest and most significant levels. However, tea trees remained wild for a long time due to their remote location and lagging productivity. The use of tea by local ethnic minorities is only crude original processing, so the wild tea tree originated from this, but the Chinese tea industry failed to thrive here. In Sichuan, located in the southwest, due to its proximity to the Central Plains, convenient transportation, and developed economy, wild tea trees were the first to be artificially transplanted and cultivated, and the earliest tea garden recorded in China was established. Tea was introduced inland after the Qin Dynasty (221—207 B.C.) unified China. After the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.—220 A.D.), due to economic development and geographical advantages, the middle reaches of the Yangtze River gradually replaced Sichuan. They became the center of China's tea industry. Tea culture also flourished with the highly developed economy and culture. After the Tang Dynasty (618—907), people of all ethnic groups in the north and south of the Yangtze River drank tea. Chinese tea eventually went to the world and became one of the world's three major beverages. Tea and tea culture covered the whole world, which is the double contribution of the Chinese nation, especially the minorities in southwest China, to the world materially and spiritually.

The Role of Tea in the Life and Customs of Ethnic Minorities

Tea undoubtedly plays a vital role in the life of ethnic minorities in China. Tea drinking originated in the southwest minority areas, and the tea culture of ethnic minorities gradually took shape. Although there are few historical records, some ancient legends and modern customs of ethnic minorities can still have some revelation. Therefore, tea culture is a crucial issue that must be carefully examined when studying China's ethnic minorities.

To Appease the Body: “San Pao Tai” and “Pot Tea” of the Hui Ethnic Group

“San Pao Tai” is named after its tea set, which consists of a tray, tea bowl, and tea cover. It is also called “Covered Bowl” or “Tea of Covered Bowl,” meaning that there is a lid on the top, a flower bowl with a large mouth and a small bottom to contain water in the middle, and the tray under the bowl that is delicate and beautiful. It originated in the flourishing Tang Dynasty (618—907). After it was introduced into northwest China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, it combined with the local Muslim tea-drinking custom. It formed unique tea products with strong local characteristics. The Hui people will put selected spring tea leaves with high-quality ice sugar in the tea bowl, rinse them in boiled water, and cover the tea bowl. At the same time, the following ingredients will also be added to the tea bowl: the first-class chrysanthemum or roses, Xinjiang raisins, walnut kernels, Fujian longan, Ningxia wolfberry, Gansu apricot, and Linze jujube.

People cannot remove or blow the top lid with their mouths when drinking. Instead, they can pick up the tea bowl tray with their left hand, grab the cover with their right hand and gently “scrape” the tea floating on the water. Doing so can grate the floating tea and promote the melting of ice sugar. So, the Hui ethnic people commonly call it “scraping the bowl” to drink the tea with the lid. It is the prevailing way of drinking tea and entertaining guests of the Hui people in Northwest China. It is exquisite to “scrape” as it is said that “it will be sweet after being scraped for the first time, fragrant after being scraped two times and the tea dew into the clear soup after being scraped three times.” With a few scratches, people should tilt the tea cover, drink slowly one mouthful at a time, and they can never pick up the cup to swallow. The local Hui people think it is normal if the tea is fragrant but not transparent, it is bitter tea if it is aromatic but not sweet, and it is not very good if it is sweet but not live.

Only those which are fresh, refreshing, and lively are the best. A sip of the tea will give the drinkers the aroma of dried fruits and the sweetness of mixed ice sugar. Therefore, the Hui people regard such tea as a good treat for guests. When the guests come to the house, the enthusiastic hosts will hand them a “San Pao Tai” cup and bring steamed bread, dried fruit, and other snacks to have tea. When the host offers the tea, the guest should not be so polite and shy, let alone a sip of the tea served, which would be considered impolite and disrespectful to the host. When offering tea, the hosts should open the bowl lid in front of the guests, put the tea ingredients in it, flush the water and cover it, and hold it in both hands, which show that this is specially brewed for the guests to show respect.

Hui compatriots living in northwest China, especially in the rural areas of Gansu and Qinghai, like to drink “canned tea.” Canned tea is usually made of medium and inferior fried green tea and boiled with water, called boiled canned tea. Generally, pots made of earthenware with a rough surface (less than 10 cm in height, less than 5 cm in caliber, and slightly larger abdomen) are filled with half a pot of water and placed on a small ignited stove. When the water in the pot

boils, 5-8 grams of tea are put into the pot, and it should be stirred while cooking to make the tea and water blend so that the tea juice is fully leached out. Add water to the pot two or three minutes later until 80% of its volume is complete, and wait until the tea boils again. The tea juice poured into the cup is strong, and ordinary people feel bitter and astringent. Still, the Hui people who have lived in the local countryside for a long time usually must drink several cups of such tea daily. The reason is that they are located on the edge of the Loess Plateau and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which have less arable land and are in the transition zone between farming culture and grassland animal husbandry culture.

Besides, the winter is long, the climate is cold, and there are few vegetables. In such circumstances, many vitamins in tea can supplement the deficiency of vegetables. There is much beef, mutton, and milk in their diet, and polyphenols in the tea can help remove greasy, aid digestion, and facilitate the absorption of dairy products. Therefore, tea has always been an indispensable livelihood for the local Hui people. In summer, they are used to making tea; in the morning, they drink boiled milk tea; in the evening or autumn and winter, they drink canned tea (Yu & Li, 2011). The average tea consumption for an adult is about one kilogram per month.

To Nourish Soul: The Tibetan Ghee Tea

Ghee tea is made by adding butter and other raw materials into the soup and then processed by unique methods. Generally, brick tea, such as Pu'er tea, is pressed and selected as raw material by young ethnic minority women (Ma, 2004) for processing ghee tea. When boiling tea, two pots should be used. One of the pots is used to boil water. After the water is boiling, the crushed tea is put into the boiling water. Because of high altitude, low pressure, and boiling temperature of less than 100 C, it takes half an hour to cook tea until the tea juice is thoroughly soaked, and the tea juice is put into a long cylindrical teapot after the tea residue is filtered out. Another pot is used to boil milk: cook until the surface is a layer of ghee (boiling milk or goat's milk, stirring with a spoon, pour it into a bamboo barrel, then condensation a layer of fat on the surface of the solution), and then the milk is poured into a teapot containing tea soup, covered with salt and sugar. The Tibetans use a long stick to pour up and down continuously until the sound inside the barrel becomes "click, click," according to their experiences. The ghee tea will not be ready until tea, butter, salt, sugar, and other ingredients are added. Ghee tea has a variety of flavors. It tastes bitter and sweet, salty and fragrant, to warm the body and increase cold resistance and nutrition.

Tibetans pay great attention to etiquette when they drink ghee tea. After the guests are seated, the homemakers will politely serve ghee tea according to age, first the elder and then the younger. According to Tibetan customs, ghee tea should be carefully savored and never exhausted. Generally, every bowl of tea should be left behind a little, which is a kind of praise for the homemaker's extraordinary skill in making tea. The homemakers will fill guests' cups or tea bowls in time. It is considered impolite and uncivilized for a guest to gobble down the tea immediately. If the guest does not want to drink anymore, he can politely throw a little tea soup left in the bowl on the ground, and the housewife will naturally stop adding tea and persuade her guest to drink.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is cold and dry, so the Tibetan people lived on milk and meat for many years, with fewer fruits and vegetables. The human body's essential vitamins and other nutrients are mainly supplemented by tea. "The absorption of fishy meat cannot be digested without tea, and the heat of highland barley also cannot be solved without tea" (Lin & He, 1998). Ghee tea is an indispensable drink in Tibetan people's lives, as proved by the saying, "We would rather have

no food in a day than tea in a day.” Tibetans can drink up to 20 bowls of tea daily, whether young or old. Many people often put teapots on the stove and boil them all day to drink whenever they like. There is a local custom: devout believers and rich people should provide tea when lamas offer sacrifices. They believe this is “virtue accumulation” and “good deeds.” Therefore, a large teapot is often more than 1.5 meters in diameter in some prominent Tibetan Lama temples. Such pot is used to boil water and tea for pilgrims during the pilgrimage, a kind of Buddhist alms. Tea is a precious gift when a man gets married, and it symbolizes the happiness and perfection of marriage (Zhao, 2020).

To Refresh Mind: The Oil Tea of the Dong Ethnic Group

The first step to making oil tea is to “order tea,” that is, to choose tea. Fresh tender tea or a special “compressed tea cake” can be used. The Dong ethnic people make tea into tea cakes for preservation. Fresh tea must be screened and boiled in the pot to remove the greenness and astringency when making tea cake. It is then dried and steamed in a wooden steamer, during which it is stacked layer by layer until the steamer is full. After cooling, it becomes a “compressed tea cake plate,” ready to be used when making oil tea.

The second step is to prepare raw materials, including Yin rice (sticky rice that is evaporated and then dried), peanuts, soybeans, onions, glutinous rice dumplings, white bamboo cake, shrimp, fish, pig liver, meal sausage, and so forth. The third step is to build a pot and “strike” the tea. During this process, people first fry the Yin rice into yellow and white rice blossoms in a pan full of boiling oil and pick them up to the dish. Secondly, fried glutinous rice cake, peanut kernels, and soybeans are used to cook pork liver, sausage, shrimp, and fish eggs, and these materials are put into different bowls, respectively. Then, boil the water used for tea, pour tea oil into a hot pot, fry a handful of Yin rice until it smokes with a burnt taste, then stir-fry tea with Jiao rice. When the smoke rises, pour water, sprinkle a little salt into the pot, and cook them together. How much tea should be boiled per pot depends on how many tea drinkers, with a custom that each drinker has a half-small bowl per time. When the tea is served, it should be accompanied by fried Yin rice, fried peanuts, fried bamboo, fried soybeans, pig liver, and fish eggs evenly divided into bowls. Then, pour the boiling tea water into the bowl with a spoon, and the fragrant oil tea will be made successfully. The prepared oil tea is rich in flavor and nutrition. It is not so much “drinking” the tea as “eating” it.

Regularly drinking oil tea can refresh the mind and heal the body, so Sanjiang Dong ethnic people in the adjacent areas of Hunan, Guangxi, and Guizhou love it. If the older people of the Dong ethnic group cannot drink oil tea, they will blame their children and grandchildren for being unfilial. If Dong people cannot drink oil tea when they go out to villages, they feel as uncomfortable as a sore, making them want to go home to make and drink it. There are usually no less than three bowls of oil tea in the family of Dong ethnic compatriots, called “three bowls shows the closeness between the guests and hosts.”

Otherwise, there is the suspicion of despising the hosts. If the guests don’t want to “eat” after three bowls, they need to put the chopsticks on the bowl or give them to the owner with the bowl. Miao, Yao, Tujia, and Zhuang ethnic compatriots who live with Dong ethnic people also drink oil tea with a slight difference in making. To make the oil tea, the Buyi ethnic people first stir-fry soybeans, corn, and glutinous rice in oil and mix them in a tea bowl. Then, they stir-fry tea with oil, add a small amount of ginger, onion, and salt to boil, remove residues, pour them into a tea bowl, and mix them well with tea ingredients to drink. These nationalities have lived in Alpine

mountainous areas where the climate has been cold for generations. Oil tea has become one of their magic weapons, and national habits have been passed down from generation to generation (Bai, 2005).

The Function of Tea Drinking Customs of Ethnic Minorities

It is true that tea plays a significant and irreplaceable role in the economic and social life of China's ethnic minorities. It is in this paper, however, noted that the tea in China's ethnic minorities has shifted from its primary roles to its practical functions of the rich and colorful tea drinking customs which originate from the different living regions and living conditions of each ethnic group. China's ethnic minorities differ in their living customs. The living traditions of each ethnic group are deeply rooted in its natural environment and subject to certain economic constraints. The following part will delve into the function of tea drinking customs of some typical ethnic groups.

Fragrant Tea of the Uygur Ethnic Group

The tea used in the fragrant tea is still Poria brick tea, but the final addition of spices is no longer milk and salt but the fine particles of pepper, cinnamon, and other spices. A copper long-necked teapot or enamel teapot is usually used for boiling fragrant tea. A mesh filter is often set on the teapot's spout to prevent tea residues and spices from mixing into the soup when pouring tea. Pepper can appetize, cinnamon can enrich Qi, and tea can refresh. Such three work together and complement each other. Fragrant tea is not so much a drink as soup. Uygurs, especially the Uyghurs in southern Xinjiang, usually drink fragrant tea three times a day, at the same time as breakfast, noon meals, and suppers. They typically eat steamed bread and drink fragrant tea. Milk tea with cow and sheep's milk is the main drink in northern Xinjiang, while spicy tea is the main drink in southern Xinjiang. Uighurs believe that "three meals a day with tea makes people refreshing and energetic to work, while three days without tea make people fatigued and lazy to get up," drinking tea is almost as important as eating it (Lin, 2011).

Salty Milk Tea of the Kazak Ethnic Group and Mongolian

Because of the coldness, fewer vegetables, and more meat, Kazakh and other minority herders and Mongolian compatriots in northern Xinjiang cannot live without milk tea. Almost every household, year after year, must drink milk tea every day, and some even drink it seven or eight times a day. The method of making milk tea is not complicated. The process of making milk tea is not complex. Generally, the Poria brick tea is first knocked into small pieces and put into a teapot containing 80% of its volume. After boiling for 4-5 minutes, a bowl of milk or a few milk pimples and a proper amount of salt will be added, and then let it boil for another five minutes or so, and a pot of milk tea will be ready. If one cannot finish it for a while, one can add some water, tea, milk, and salt to simmer it to have milk tea at any time. The host will welcome the guest into the tent and sit on the floor when the guest arrives. The hospitable hostess will immediately spread a clean white cloth on the ground, offer roast mutton, steamed bread (a round cake baked with wheat flour), butter, honey, fruit, and other food to show their hospitality, and then serve a bowl of milk tea. According to local customs, when the guests have drunk enough, they only need to separate their five fingers with their right hand and gently cover the tea bowl when the hostess offers tea to understand and no longer add tea.

Every Mongolian and Kazakh woman has practiced making milk tea, and everyone is a good tea maker. When girls become sensible, their mothers teach them to make milk tea. When a

Mongolian girl gets married, her mother-in-law will welcome her to the house. After that, the bride has to show her ability to cook tea in front of her relatives and friends. She will serve all the guests salted milk tea to display her extraordinary skill in making tea and being well tutored (Bai, 2005).

The Naxi Ethnic Group's "Dragon and Tiger" Tea

The "dragon and tiger fight" in the *Naxi* dialect is called "Akil roast." The way to drink is to put a small pot the size of a fist on the fire's edge to bake hot first, then continue to bake after adding tea and shake the jar continuously while baking. Water will be added to the pot when the tea is roasted to yellow. After doing so, the tea suddenly boiled and bubbled. After the bubbles overflow, the tea will be filled with boiling water. In addition, take another clean teacup; pour half a cup of highly white wine and hot solid tea into it. When the cold wind encounters the hot tea, a pleasant sound is also accompanied, and the fragrance of tea and wine is overflowing. The Naxi ethnic people regard this sound as a symbol of auspiciousness. The louder the sound, the more promising the people present are. The *Naxi* ethnic people even add hot pepper to the teacup of this kind of tea wine to treat colds. People who have a cold drink a cup before bed will sweat all over and become cured after waking up (Shou & Gong, 2010).

Bamboo Tube Fragrant Tea of Lahu And Dai Ethnic Groups

Bamboo tube fragrant tea is called "Vajina" in the *Lahu* ethnic dialect and "*La Dao*" in the Dai ethnic dialect, a unique tea drink. Its delicate raw materials are "Girl Tea," produced in Mangham County, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture. There are two ways to make it: pick two or three tender buds and put them into a tube of delicate sweet bamboo (also called carnation and golden bamboo), which grows for one year after being killed and twisted in an iron pot. The bamboo tube fragrant tea made this way has the mellow fragrance of tea and the intense fragrance of sweet bamboo. Another method is to put 0.25 kilograms of first-grade *Maojian* Tea into a small steamer, the bottom of which is stacked with glutinous rice soaked in thickness of 6-7 cm and the center of which is padded with gauze and steam for about 15 minutes. When the tea softens and fully absorbs the aroma of glutinous rice, pour it out and immediately put it into the prepared bamboo tube. This method produces bamboo tube fragrant tea simultaneously with tea fragrance, sweet bamboo fragrance, and glutinous rice fragrance.

The bamboo tubes used in the above two methods should be placed on the tea-baking rack about 40 centimeters above the charcoal fire, baked slowly with a gentle fire, and turned over once in about 5 minutes. When the bamboo tube changes from green to brown and all the tea in the tube is dried, the bamboo tube should be cut open, and the bamboo tube's fragrant tea thus has been successfully made. Bamboo tube fragrant tea is a dark brown cylinder shaped like a bamboo tube with many characteristics, such as tender buds and leaves, bright yellow-green soup, refreshing taste, and long aftertaste. When the bamboo tube fragrant tea is wrapped in kraft paper and stored in a dry place, its quality can remain unchanged for many years. After 5 minutes of boiling water, it is drinkable, quenches thirst, and relieves fatigue no matter what people want. Drinking makes people comfortable (Sun, et al., 2010).

Blang Ethnic Group's Sour Tea and Pot-Cap Tea

Most of the Blang ethnic people live in the alpine areas above 1,500m altitude and are accustomed to "eating" sour tea all year round. During May and June's hot and humid seasons, the pickled

young tea leaves are boiled and fermented in a dark place for more than ten days to make sour tea. Then, they are put into a bamboo tube and buried in the soil. After one month, they can be taken out and eaten. The way to have sour tea is to eat rather than brew. The tea should be chewed carefully and slowly in the mouth when eating. It has the effect of quenching thirst and helping digestion.

Making pot tea involves putting tea leaves and several pieces of burning charcoal in a gong pot and shaking the Gong pot up and down several times with both hands tightly so that the tea and charcoal are constantly rolling evenly. When there is a lot of green smoke and a strong fragrance of tea, people pour out the tea and charcoal together, quickly pick out the charcoal with chopsticks, and then pour the tea back into the pot and add water to boil for a few minutes to drink (Chen, 2000).

The Miao Ethnic Group's Popo Tea and Insect Tea

Popo tea is made by putting together shelled pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds, sun-dried and sliced camphor leaf tips, and sliced tender cured ginger and storing them in a container for reserve after being stirred evenly. When drinking tea, people take some into a cup and then brew with boiled tea soup while drinking with a spoon to scoop food. Newly married Miao ethnic women often entertain guests with such kinds of tea.

Insect tea is a special kind of tea that has a unique making method. This kind of tea is made by mixing fresh leaves and some fragrant leaves picked from tea trees in bamboo baskets or barrels and pouring rice-washing water to make them ferment naturally. A few days later, a peculiar nitrogen odor was emitted, attracting insects with a particular function of making tea: settling down and reproducing. Its larvae are particularly fond of rotting tea leaves and fragrant leaves and excrete grains of feces smaller than rapeseed. Collect this kind of excrement and dry it in the sun. It is Insect tea. When drinking such tea, people should first pour boiled water into the cup, put a proper amount of tea in it, and cover it. Insect tea pellets float on the water first, and the tea can be drunk when they slowly sink to the bottom of the cup and begin to dissolve. The soup brewed with insect tea is delicious and refreshing. Miao ethnic compatriots in the Wuling Mountains of Muzhi County, Chengdu County, and Hunan Province especially like to drink such tea, also called Chengdu insect tea (Lin, 2008).

Sandao Tea of the Bai Ethnic Group

Tea, for the first time, is called "thunder tea." First, put a small amount of tea in the sand pot on the side of the fire to bake. At the same time, keep shaking the teapot. When the color of the tea leaves is yellowish and emits an attractive fragrance, put the boiled water into it, making a unique sound given by the pot. After that, people can see the tea leaves churning in the pot and the foam rising and spilling out. When the bubbles fall, people can add boiled water, and tea will be cooked, the color of which is as bright as amber. Pour into the cup and add a little boiled water; it is ready to drink with a bitter taste, fragrance, and mellowness. The second course of tea, also called "sweet tea" or "sugar tea," is made by refilling the teapot with boiled water, taking a small bowl, putting walnut slices and brown sugar into it, and pouring the tea into it. The tea is rolling in the bowl. The thin walnut nuts are shaking like cicada wings. This time, the tea is fragrant, and its taste is sweet. The third tea course has half a spoonful of honey plus two or three red peppers in the bowl. After making it, people should shake it while drinking. Its taste is sweet, slightly spicy, and somewhat bitter.

After drinking the tea three times, it is bitter, sweet, and hemp and spicy, which means that life has bitterness and sweetness, and it will be splendid after experiencing a lot of trouble, which is endless to recall. Therefore, it is also called “aftertaste tea,” reflecting Bai ethnic compatriots’ philosophical understanding of life (Chen, 1991).

Wheat Tea and Kernels Tea of the Salar Ethnic Group

Wheat tea is made by stir-frying roasted and semi-coke wheat grains with two or three salt spoons. After the wheat tea is thoroughly boiled, it can be drunk. It can also be cooked in earthenware pots with Songchuan tea. Wheat tea tastes similar to coffee, which is sweet and delicious. It is beneficial to neutralize the stomach and stop nausea. Therefore, Salar ethnic people call such tea “their coffee” vividly, and Salar ethnic middle-aged and old people especially like it. Kernel tea is a teapot with walnut kernels, matched with Songchuan tea (from Songpan, Sichuan Province, now usually made in Yiyang, Hunan) with a small amount of salt boiled repeatedly. It has a rich fragrance, with the effects of Invigorating Qi and regulating the lungs, refreshing the spirit, maintaining black hair, and warming up against cold (Yu & Li, 2011).

Conclusion

Based on the above ethnographic exploration of China’s tea culture, ethnic minorities, as its birthplace, combine their cultural traditions and lifestyles with tea-drinking customs to create a functional tea culture. Since tea has long had a sound discipline in China, whether it is planting, making, brewing, evaluation, etc., it has become a professional discipline system and has developed to a higher level. Given cultural co-construction and integration, it is suggested that global tea be promoted to promote traditional Chinese culture to the world better. On the one hand, international certifications related to Chinese tea are to be established, thus building a standardized and international export system for Chinese tea culture to go global. On the other hand, a global cultural experience center is to be constructed for Chinese tea, promoting Chinese tea to become the warm calling card of Chinese culture. In recent years, “tea gatherings” have appeared multiple times on important diplomatic occasions in China, not only creating an equal and open atmosphere for communication and conveying the cultural charm of China’s characteristic diplomacy as a significant country but also demonstrating the Chinese nation’s inclusive style of using “tea” as a guide to convey the cultural values of peace, inclusiveness, civilization, and green to the world through a cup of tea. Making Chinese tea a vital platform for the world to understand Chinese tea culture and traditional Chinese etiquette is insightful. Convincingly, this paper makes an ethnological attempt to delve into China’s tea culture of ethnic minorities. Establishing the international certifications and cultural experience center of Chinese tea, those mentioned above request further exploration to fulfill people tastes worldwide.

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