

An Analytical Study on the Tea Culture of China and Sri Lanka

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Camellia Synensis නම් උද්භිද නාමයෙන් හැඳින්වෙන තේ ශාකයේ මවු රට චීනය බව බොහෝ පර්යේෂකයන්ගේ මතය යි. වසර හාර දහසකට පමණ පෙර චීනයේ ඡන්තොන් අධිරාජ්‍යයාගේ අහඹු සොයාගැනීමක් අනුව ඖෂධයක් ලෙස ඇරැඹුණු තේ පානය අද වන විට එරට ජන ජීවිතයේ අත්‍යවශ්‍ය අංගයක් බවට පත් වී ඇත. දහ නව වැනි ශත වර්ෂයේ මැද භාගයේ දී බ්‍රිතාන්‍යයන් විසින් චීනයේ සිට තේ ශාකය ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට ගෙන එනු ලැබූ අතර එතැන් පටන් එය මෙරට ප්‍රමුඛතම අපනයන බෝගයක් ලෙස ප්‍රවලිත විය. ජලයට පමණක් දෙ වැනි වූ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ තේ පානය කිරීමේ නැඹුරුව නව තේ සංස්කෘතියකට ද මග සැලැසී ය. දෙ රටේ තේ සංස්කෘති පිළිබඳ විග්‍රහයක යෙදීම මේ අධ්‍යයනයේ අරමුණ යි.

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සංස්. පී. ඒ. අමිල මදුසංක, ජයමල් ද සිල්වා, දිල්ඡාන් මනෝජී රාජපක්ෂ,
චන්දන රුවන් කුමාර, එච්. ඒ. ගිහාන් මධුසංඛ, නන්දුලා පෙරේරා
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මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

Introduction

China is the homeland of tea, the Chinese started to use tea as medicine and food 4,000 years ago (Emperor Shennong's Herbal Classics cited in Li, 1993). In Han Dynasty, tea has become the special beverage among the royal families. Since Tang Dynasty, tea drinking became a daily social vogue and was enjoyed by the royal family and courtiers as well as by the ordinary people. Ancient Chinese intellectuals left behind a great volume of poems, chimeric verses, songs, paintings and ballads about tea. Tea drinking was regarded as the high fashion, from which derived tea rituals and tea arts (Yang, 2007).

Chinese tea is connected closely with Chinese Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Traditionally, drinking tea was the best way for learners to inspire themselves: Taoists used to drink tea for self-cultivation and keeping the oneness of soul and body; Buddhists used to drink tea for deeper understanding of Zen. From the ideology of Confucius, drinking tea could judge a person's character and level of morality and emphasise the feeling of objective environment and inner heart. As Chinese society developed and progressed, tea production has played a role in driving economic development while tea consumption has remained a practice of daily life.

Sri Lankan tea ranks the best among world teas and over the 138 year of tea industry in Sri Lanka and is one of the most fabulously enjoyed beverages in Sri Lanka. The unique tastes and the impeccable aromas of Ceylon Tea is what makes it famous around the globe. It was as far back as the year 1824 in which the British brought a tea plant from China to Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was known at the time). It was planted in the Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya and is considered to have been the first non-commercial tea plant in Sri Lanka. Tea as a crop was first introduced to Sri

Lanka in the middle of the 19th century, when Coffee Leaf Rust disease was destroying the coffee plantations in the country. James Taylor, a Scot started the first commercial tea plantation at Loolkandura Estate in 1867. The legacy of Sri Lankan tea industry shows that Sri Lanka is one of the oldest tea producing countries in the world. The tea produced in this country is popularly known as “Ceylon Tea” and ranks among the best available teas in the international trade. Over the years, the word Ceylon has become synonymous with quality tea.

Tea Culture

Xu (1999) and Yang et al (2001) define tea culture as the derivative of tea, and a series of phenomena of material, spirit, customs, psychology and behavior with tea at the core, which, without any exception, demonstrate the natural property and social and cultural property of tea. Tea culture can be broadly defined as the total of tea related material and spiritual wealth during the process of tea development, which combines tangible and intangible products including ethic demonstration, etiquette norm, esthetic, religion, arts and tea-growing, tea-processing techniques and materials.

Tea Culture in China

琴棋书画诗酒花
qínqíshūhuàshījǐūhuā,
当年件件不离它
dāngniánjiànjiànbulítā,
而今事事都变更
érjīnshìshìdōubiàngēng
柴米油盐酱醋茶
Cháimǐyóuyánjiàngùchá

This doggerel was recorded in Lianpo Shihua [Lianpo's Collection of Poems] written by Zha Weiren (1695-1749) in Qing Dynasty (1644-1912)¹ which is translated into English as follows: "lyre-playing, chess, calligraphy, painting, poetry, liquor and flower are unique romances it was difficult to separate from life. Now everything changes, "firewood, rice, cooking oil, salt, soy-bean sauce, vinegar and tea" has become the necessities of life. The third line in this doggerel *cháimǎnyóuyánjiàngcùchá*, which means "the firewood, rice, cooking oil, salt, soybean sauce, vinegar and tea", was noted and had become a Chinese saying since Song Dynasty (960-1279). It has been called *kāiménqījiànshì*, which means the [firewood, rice, cooking oil, salt, soybean sauce, vinegar and tea had become] seven necessities of daily life.

Like a Chinese proverb, "*cháimǎnyóuyánjiàngcùchá*" was widely used in every kind of literary output. Though these poems mentioned above are literature works, in an aside they also reflect tea as a part of the necessities, which has been integrated deeply into people's daily lives for over 1000 years. Tea originated from agricultural civilisation, and has been vested by a long history with its cultural and spiritual characteristics, and also become an indispensable part of Chinese culture.

Tea Culture in China is Reflected through the Following Aspects:

Drinking tea: Tea is taken as a beverage to quench thirst. In china, regardless of the age, every citizen enjoys drinking tea. It is a common sight that people carry a tea flask wherever they go and they like to sip tea while working, studying and spending leisure time. In almost all Chinese restaurants, tea is served before meals and guests are warmly welcomed by a cup of tea in many households.

Tasting tea: The quality of the tea is judged by the color, fragrance and flavor of the tea, the water quality and even the tea set. When tasting tea, the taster should be able to savor the tea thoroughly.

Tea art: While drinking attention is paid to environment, atmosphere, music, infusing techniques and interpersonal relationships.

The highest ambit- Tea-lore: Philosophy, ethics and morality are blended into tea activity. People cultivate their morality and mind, and savor life through tasting tea, thereby attaining joy of spirit.

A representative part of Chinese tea culture is Tea Houses. In the history, teahouse has been called *Chaguan*, *Chasi*, *Chaliao*, *Chashi*, *Chafang*, *Chawu*, *Chatan* and so on. Different names represent different forms of teahouses. Some are big, some are small, but the functions are usually the same. Teahouse acts as an important intersection point of tea culture. The formation of a teahouse is closely associated with the development of drinking tea tradition. In the long history, a teahouse has always been the place where people from different classes get together to enjoy their social lives.

It is not only a place of tea consumption, but also a platform for tea culture demonstration, communication and broadcasting. Today, in China, while teahouses remain popular as leisure places, the tradition of drinking tea is no longer the main service they offer. In modern China, especially the aged population or people who have retired from their occupations tends to spend their whole day in tea houses. From morning tea to the evening tea, Chinese people enjoy a variety of activities such as playing Chinese chess, cards and mahjong majiang, reading newspapers, chatting, recalling old memories, smoking, playing Chinese musical instruments etc.

When the initial rise of tea culture started, it was mainly concentrated in the culture of the upper class among the literati, monks, the monarch and his official. In Jin dynasty, drinking tea instead of wine is a way for the people from the elite class to meet with guests and show their simplicity. With the popularity of drinking tea among the common people, teahouses have emerged rapidly. The citizens' tradition of drinking tea had become a new feature of tea culture.

The Traditional Chinese Tea Ceremony

Tea was cultivated in the beginning mainly as herbal medicine and mostly within temples. Monks began to use tea for its peace and calming effects and as a sign of humility and respect for nature. One of the first written accounts about the tea ceremonies dates as far back as 1200 years ago, during the Tang Dynasty. The serving of tea was also named "chadao" which meant "the way of tea". Attention to tea preparation and serving were the preoccupations of the Chinese tea connoisseurs which transformed the way tea was regarded by the Chinese.

Chinese tea ceremony was born as a result of the respect for nature and the need for peace which the religious ceremonies involved. The philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have blended together giving birth to the magical Chinese tea ceremony. The traditional tea ceremonies were described as "he" which translates as "peace", "jing" which translates as "quiet", "yi" which means "enjoyment" and "zhen" meaning "truth".

As the time passed, Chinese people started to appreciate the enjoyment of tea and its social value, besides its medicinal purposes. Tea ceremonies went from being only religious manifestations to becoming social, cultural and traditional events in different celebrations to honor the royal family or to mark different

important events in people’s lives. One of the famous Chinese tea ceremonies is the one named Gongfu tea ceremony, also known as Kungfu tea ceremony. It is known as the Chinese traditional tea ceremony. Oolong tea is traditionally served during this ceremony. Gongfu cha literally translates as “making tea with efforts” and it actually represents the ceremony of preparing and serving oolong tea as a sign of respect for the guests the tea is prepared for, and humility when it comes to nature.

The Gongfu tea ceremony isn’t the only tea performing ritual in China, but it is the most popular one. There are other tea ceremonies in China with their own significance and practice, depending on the region of origin and history. Wu-Wo tea ceremony is a style of Chinese tea ceremony which encourages participants to forget who they are. The participants must forget about their knowledge, wealth, and appearance and establish a group equality without any prejudice. In Chinese Buddhist usage, wu-wo translates in Sanskrit as “anatta” meaning “no individual independent existence”. Wu-Wo tea ceremony began in Taiwan and extended in all the Buddhist countries especially in China, being a highly spiritual type of ceremony.

Chinese Wedding Tea Ceremony

Tea ceremony is the most significant event in a modern Chinese wedding as the traditional three prayers ceremony is usually not practiced. The bride is formally introduced to the groom’s family through the Chinese wedding tea ceremony. It will usually take place on the wedding day when most of the family members are present. Any sweet tea, symbolising sweetness in the new union, is good for the Chinese wedding tea ceremony. You can use sweetened red tea for simplicity sake, but some traditional Chinese sweet teas are preferred for the good connotations in their names.

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- Lotus seeds and red dates tea - Symbolising that the couple will bear children quickly and continuously.
- Longans and red dates tea - The longan represents a “dragon” and the wish for having male children.

Tea Ware

An inseparable element of tea Art is the vessels specially designed for brewing tea. You cannot prepare the perfect tea without the right tools. For the tea ceremony the perfect tea ware is needed to ensure the right brewing and the magical atmosphere of the entire ceremony. The items must be both practical and aesthetic, the perfect ying-yang combination. The mandatory tools are a Yixing teapot or a porcelain teapot, a tea pitcher or chahai, a brewing tray, a teaspoon, usually three small cups and a tea strainer.

The Chinese wedding tea set is a meaningful keepsake of the wedding. The bride’s parents will pay for the tea set which is part of the dowry. The bride will use it again when her own daughter gets married in the future. There are both western and Chinese style tea sets. Tea sets with western style cups seemed to be the popular choice now. Popular designs include double joy, dragon and phoenix, peony or other flower motifs and gold trimmings. Tea sets designed specifically for Chinese wedding tea ceremony will not have containers for creamer or sugar. The tea pot come in various sizes and are either round or oval. Usually four tea cups and a serving tray complete the set.

Sri Lankan Tea Culture

Tea for Sri Lankans is literally second to water, every single person enjoys at least three cups a day, and that is just minimally. Every occasion is celebrated with a cup of tea, and Sri Lankans would not substitute it for anything else. It’s the poor man’s’ drink of choice and the rich man’s’ as well.

Tea has become an integral part of the Sri Lankan culture since it goes hand in hand with hospitality, every house hold offers tea to guests every time, no exceptions. It is served at festivals and gatherings, almost anywhere in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans prefer black tea powder while Chinese prefer green tea or leaf tea. In Sri Lankan households tea is prepared as a day to day habit without any ceremonial style. In ancient Sri Lanka, most people preferred “Kahata” which is prepared with tea powder added to boiling hot water with no sugar added, later on people preferred to add some sugar so as to make it a sweeter beverage which is called “plain tea” by locals, while some add milk to make it a “milk tea”. During British colonial era, tea was produced to quench the thirst of Royal family of United Kingdom and western world, especially of USA and Britain and of the British governors. Later the habit of drinking tea spread among the local commoners.

“The ‘gorogoro’ of the water boiling in the kettle was followed by a cloud of steam emerging from the kettle spout. Drops of condensed steams moistened the corner of the stove.

“No sugar” said Irene, handing me a steaming cup of tea. She poured a cup for herself and sat beside me.

We had become accustomed to drinking tea without sugar most times, because we could not afford it, not because we didn’t like sugar with our tea. We drank four or five cups of tea a day to keep our selves warm and to keep up our spirits. If we added sugar each time, our expenses would have exceeded our meager income.”¹

According to the above quote from THE AGE OF KALI (KALIYUGAYA) by Martin Wickramasinghe, the great Sinhalese writer who was the greatest social researcher during 1960’s who illustrated the evolution of society from the rural life to the urban

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life, we can identify that regardless of the rich and poor, all could afford “tea” and sugar was a luxury good. The quality of tea never degraded due to the lack of sugar. It still laborates that people had four or five cups of tea a day to keep themselves warm and to keep up their spirits. Since then, Sri Lankan working class has an addiction to tea, they tend to have a sip of tea during their hard work and after their tiring day.

When compared to China, Sri Lanka doesn't have a specific “tea house” to have tea, but every Sri Lankan restaurant serve a warm cup of tea, while in rural areas in “Kadamandiya” (local bazaar) we still can observe a unique Sri Lankan style of villagers gathering to sip tea in the evenings. Sri Lankan tea culture in these local bazaars include playing draughts, cards, narrating stories, reading newspapers and gossiping.

Unlike the Chinese Tea Ceremony, in Sri Lanka, serving tea has no specific ceremonial rituals. It is served at almost all occasions where it is needed. In Sri Lankan traditional wedding ceremony, a prosperous table of traditional sweet meats and tea is arranged to welcome the groom's relatives. In general, where people gather, offering tea has become a habit more than a custom. Unlike the Chinese traditional tea ceremony tools or beautiful sets of porcelain Chinese tea ware, Sri Lankans use tea pots, tea cups and saucers, sugar bowls, milk jars and teaspoons which are spotlessly clean, free from discoloration, cracks and chipping. When the tea is served, one teaspoon in the sugar bowl is placed for the sugar to be spooned out and a separate teaspoon for every cup and saucer.

In both Sri Lanka and China, tea is still considered a medicine. Long before tea became a part of people's daily lives, which is during the lifetime of ShenNong, tea was only considered to be a medical treatment for illnesses used by doctors of traditional Chinese medicine.¹ The first record of tea appeared in Shennonng

ben caojing (The Classic of Herbal Medicine), which is the first Chinese medicine book in the history. It is said that the book was written by the emperor ShenNong² in East Han dynasty (25-220). And the first record of tea which was used as a kind of drink instead of medicine appeared in the San Guo Three Kingdoms Period (220-280) in Zhang Yi’s book Guangya.³ Though the medical function of tea is been used until today, comparing with the use of tea drinking, it only holds a small part among all the functions of tea. However, Sri Lanka holds no records of using tea as an ingredient of local indigenous medicine, it is a very popular ingredient of western medicine which has an effect of weight loosing. In modern days, in Sri Lanka, “Herbal Tea” is very popular as it is believed that the extracts of tea leaves can reduce cholesterol levels, and high blood pressure. They are also helpful with anti-aging, Cancer, Colds and Infections, Heart Disease, Hypertension, Immunodepression etc.

Tea tourism as a new niche market has become more and more popular in both China and Sri Lanka and has given a huge significance to tea culture. Tea tourists are mainly tea lovers driven by their interest in tea and tea culture. Jolliffe defined tea tourism as ‘tourism that is motivated by an interest in the history, traditions and consumption of tea’ (Jolliffe, 2007 p9). She then defined tea tourists as ‘a tourist experiencing history, culture and traditions related to the consumption of tea’ (Jolliffe, 2007, p10). Jolliffe also commented on the wide range of experiences and opportunities which tea can provide for travelers, including tea shop trails, the partaking of the tea ceremony and visits to tea gardens or museums. In Sri Lankan travel itineraries(chayuanhuoche) “tea garden train tour” has attracted millions of tourists to this paradise. Apart from that, the ladies who pluck tea in lush green tea estate slopes provide a fine sight. In Sri Lanka visiting tea gardens, tea factories, tasting and buying different flavors of tea is popular. In Sri Lanka, tea

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tourism includes all cultural aspects of tea tourism of China other than the experience of tea house and traditional tea ceremony, which are very unique to the Chinese Tea Culture.

Tea is a social custom and is a part of many celebrations in both Chinese and Sri Lankan culture. Tea is served to welcome guests and show their respects in both cultures and has been a long time tradition since the ancient period. In modern society, people drink tea, enjoy the tea drinking traditions and antique atmosphere and travel for Tea. Although there are differences in how people consume tea, how tea has become a necessity to their lives, and the rituals bound with tea, tea still plays a major role in day-to-day lives of Chinese and Sri Lankans.

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