

Chapter 10

Chinese Tea Culture Spreads Worldwide

The Sprread of Chinese Tea Culture to Japan and Korea

The spread of Chinese tea and tea culture to eastern countries, especially to Japan and Korea, is noticeable. There are several reasons for the spread. Civilized early, Korea and Japan, like China, have many detailed records about the spread of tea and culture. According to historical documents and cultural relics excavated, China is the cultural source of Korea and Japan. Therefore, Korea and Japan absorbed bot only Chinese tea, but also its material and spiritual forms. Korea and Japan, where tea is drunk without refreshments, impoted Chinese tea just after the Saint of Tea Lu Yu established the system of tea culture in the Tang Dynasty. Every change of tea culture from the Tang Dynasty to the Ming Dyansty spread abroad, and Korea and Japanese students studying in China were first enlightened by the Chinese culture.

According to records,in 593, in the reign of Emperor Wendi of the Sui Dynasty (581-601), China introduced tea to Japan along with the spread of its culture, art and Buddhism to apan. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, on April 8, 729, which was the first year of the reign of Mikado Amahira, a grand tea drinking activity was held in the Japanese royal

court. That day, Mikado gathered 100 monks to expound the texts of Buddhism in the royal residence. The next day, the monks were **granted** tea. Over 70 years later, the founder of the Japanese **Tiantai** (**tien-tai**) sect of Buddhism, came to China in 804 (the 20th year of Zhenyuan during the reign of Emperor Dezong of the Tang Dynasty), he returned to his country with a lot of Buddhist scriptures and Chinese tea seed, which were planted on a Mountain near a river. Another outstanding Japanese monk came to China also in 804, but returned to Japan in 806. He learned the Truth-word Sect of Buddhism in Chang'an (today's Xi'an), China. When he returned to Japan, he took with him tea seeds, a stone **mortar** with which to process tea, as well as the skills of processing tea by steaming, pounding and roasting. At that time, encouraged by the monks, the Japanese started to drink tea as people of the Tang Dynasty did. They boiled cake tea, and added such condiments as sweet kudzu vines and ginger. Owing to the limited qauntity of tea tree planted, only the royal family and a small number of monks drank tea at the time.

After the reign of Hirayasu, Japan made fewer contacs with China over almost 200 years from the Five Dynasties (907-960) to the Song and Liao dynasties. For some reasons, tea was stamped out in Japan. It was nt until the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) that Japanese monk **Eisai** reintroduced tea into Japan.

When he was 14 years old, Eisai left home and was intiated onto monkhood, studying in the Buddhisy institute of the highest learning

dedicated to the Japanese Tiantai sect. At the age of 21, he was determined to study in China. In the fourth year (1168) of Qiandao during the reign of Emperor Xiaozong of the Southern Song Dynasty, Eisai started off in Mingzhou Prefecture, Zhejiang Province, traveled through famous mountains and visited magnificent temples south of the Yangze River, paid respects to Master Xu'an of the Chan Sect at the Longevity Temple on the Tiantai Mountain, and moved to the Jingde Temple on the Tongshan Mountain with Master Xu'an. At that time tea drinking prevailed, and Eisai enjoyed the local customs. He lived in China for 24 years, and returned to Japan in the third year (1192) of Shaoxi during the reign of Guangzong of the Song Dynasty. Therefore, Eisai knew not only the general skills of Chinese tea art, but also the tea art of the Chan Sect. This is one of the major reasons why the Japanese tea art specially stresses Dhyana. After he returned to Japan, Eisai personally planted tea trees, and wrote *Health Preserving By Drinking tea*, which absorbed the ideas of the *Book of Tea* by Lu YU, and specially stressed such functions of tea as health care and cultivation of one's moral character. Eisai was the real founder of the Japanese tea art.

In the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, Japanese monks continued to come to China. In particular, **eminent** Japanese monks mastered the tea -drinking skills of both the Ming Buddhist monks and the scholars, combined their skills, and created the Japanese tea art, which started to reach perfection. It can be seen from the above that the Japanese

introduced, and then according to their own national traits, improved Chinese tea art and the skills of planting, producing and drinking tea. It is not, therefore, a surprise that the Japanese retained the ancient Chinese tea art and formed a branch of the Chinese culture.

According to reliable records, tea was introduced from China into Korea during the period from 632 to 646. From then on, Chinese custom of drinking tea and Chinese tea art were introduced. Eminent Korean monk (755-850) who set up the Double Stream Temple in Korea, was written, "If Chinese tea is received again, put it in a stone pot and boil it with firewood."

Drinking tea became a ceremony in Korean temples during this period. The book *Travels in the South* by a Korean writer, who mastered the skills of making tea, reads "I had intended to boil tea to present the revered Xiao, but found no spring water. Suddenly the spring water in the rock crack gushed out, smelling sweet like milk. So I tried making tea with the spring water." It can be seen from this that Korean monks not only boiled tea in ceremonies, but also paid attention to tea art and the quality of water used to make tea. In 828 (the second year of Dahe during the reign of Emperor Wenzong of the Tang Dynasty), an envoy from Korea took tea seeds away with him from China.

From then on, the Korean started to plant and produce tea. At present, Koreans produce more than 1.5 million kilograms of tea annually on over 20,000 mu (1334 hectares) of major tea plantations.

It is generally thought that Chinese tea was introduced into South Asia in

the Northern (960-1127) and Southern (1127-1279) Song dynasties. The Northern Song government established maritime tax supervisorates in Guangzhou, Mingzhou, Hangzhou and Quanzhou. Tea was exported to Southeast Asia through Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and to Japan and Korea through Mingzhou.

In the Southern Song Dynasty, the Chinese did business with Arabia, Palestine, Italy, Japan and other countries. Foreign businessmen often traveled between ports of China. At that time, Quanzhou, a major port opening port to foreign countries, had frequent trade contacts with several Asian and African countries,. Tea produced in Fujian Province was sold abroad in Large quantities. In particular, Fengming Tea (today's Shiting Green Tea) produced in the Lotus Peak of Nan'an became a major product exported to South Asia, due to the fact that tea helps **digestion**, **diminishes inflammation**, and increases the discharge of **urine**.

In the Ming Dynasty, Zheng He made voyages to the Western world seven times, and traveled through Viet Nam, Java, India, Sri Lanka, the Arabian Peninsula and the eastern part of Africa, each time taking tea with him. At that time, tea drinking was popular in Southeast Asia.

The countries of Southeast Asia not only imported Chinese tea, but also introduced from China the skills for planting tea. Tea planting began in Indonesia in the 16th century, with the major plantations in Sumatra. In 1684 and 1731, Chinese tea seeds were introduced into Southeast Asia in a large

quantities. The year 1731, in particular, witnessed a remarkable success in the **germination** rate.

Tea was introduced to India by Tibetans. It is estimated that Indians started to get some idea of the skills of drinking Chinese tea in the Tang and Song dynasties. In 1780 and 1788 the East India Company imported some tea powder into India, which gradually became one of the big tea-producing countries.

It was of great importance that the countries of the South Asia planted Chinese tea and formed the habit of drinking tea. This is because Chinese tea was exported by sea through these countries to the Mediterranean and European and African countries, and a tea route leading to the West developed after the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Through the countries of South Asia the Western countries imported the skills of planting and producing Chinese tea, produced large quantities of tea by virtue of the favorable natural conditions and the cheap labor force of the Southeast Asia, and then transported the tea to Europe. This was much more convenient than the purchase of tea directly from China in the Ming Dynasty and the early Qing Dynasty. Therefore, the popularity of planting and drinking tea in South Asia not only reflected the extension of Chinese tea culture, but was also a prelude to the development and spread of Chinese tea culture towards the West. So further study of the custom of drinking tea in South Asia and its influence upon the West is a major requirement.

The Spread of Chinese Tea to the West

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Largely underwent three periods.

The first period was during the Yuan Dynasty, when Khan and Hubilai mounted a large scale expedition. Since Mongolia was very early the transport station for the tea of the Central Plains to spread to the Central and West Asia, the Mongols cannot have gone without taking milky tea with them far to Europe via West Asia on this **expedition**. Eastern Europe probably got information about Chinese tea in this period, and it is likely that the expedition was connected to the fact that Russians imported tea from China later.

Naturally, there were some who gained information about Chinese tea **on their own initiative**. Chinese tea was seen in Western records in the Yuan Dynasty. Marco Polo, a famous Italian envoy as well as a friend of the Chinese people, came to China with his uncle from the north, **Shangdu and Dadu**. He stayed in China for more than ten year, and served as an official. At that time, people kept tea cakes, which had been used since the Tang and Song dynasties, as well as loose tea and the skill of stirring tea. Marco Polo, who maintained frequent contacts with the Chinese people, cannot have been unaware of their custom of drinking tea. Over ten years later, he returned to his own country as an envoy of the Yuan government this time he made his way from the south , traveling through the tea towns south of the Yangze

River, the countries of South Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. It is unknown whether he presented tea as gifts to the countries he traveled. However, according to *the Travels of Marco Polo*, which he wrote after he returned to his country, he took from China porcelain, macaroni and tea. The book was a sensation in the West, and Chinese tea has become a desired item among European since then.

The second period was the Ming Dynasty, about the 16th century, when Chinese tea was exported on a small scale and was gradually spread abroad.

Russians got Chinese tea first. In 1567, when Emperor Muzong of the Ming Dynasty ascended the throne, two men from southern imperial Russia were said to have got Chinese tea and introduced it into Russia. In 1618, the Chinese ambassador in Russia presented a small amount of tea to the tsar. In 1735, the private trade caravans established during the reign of Empress Elizaberth traveled between China and Russia, and specially conveyed tea for the royal family, nobles and officials owing to the arduous transportation, the tea was expensive.

After the travels of Marco Polo, the European documents during the reign of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty officially recorded tea drinking in China. At that time Lamaswar, a famous Venetian writer, wrote about his voyage and tea. Another book was titled Chinese Tea. From this period, the knowledge about tea drinking spread fully to Europe. Later, a Portuguese Catholic, wrote about Chinese tea in Portuguese after he returned to his

country from China.

The third period was the period when Chinese tea was exported on a large scale and the tea trade gradually expanded.

The first period , accompanied by the rise of capitalism and the adoption of the colonial policy, was really created by the East India Company, which was set up in Holland in 1606. in 1607, Dutch ships reached Java, a Dutch colony. They arrived later in Macao, was the beginning of Westerners transporting tea from their colonies in the east, and start of the importation of tea from China to Western Europe. In 1637, ships of the British East India Company transported tea from Gangzhou, China,. At the same time, the tea business between China and Britain started. Sweden ,Holland, Denmark, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Hungary and some other countries later transported a huge amount of tea from China each year.

When tea was first taken to Europe, people did not know it very well. Many people still took a skeptical attitude towards tea until the 18th century when coffee began to be introduced into Europe; people had different views on the two new drinks. Tradition says that to get to the bottom of the matter, the Swedish King managed to find twin convicts sentenced to death to test whether tea and coffee did harm to people's health. The king said that if they agreed to test, they could be pardoned. Considering that they were likely to survive after the test, the twins agreed. Thus, everyday one of them had several coffees, and the other drank several cups of tea. The test achieved an

unprecedented success. The twin brothers lived many years without any trouble, and the twin who drank tea died at the age of 83. In this way, Chinese tea was finally accepted throughout Europe.