

# Analysis of Tea Material Culture in China and Britain

Yijie Gao<sup>1,\*</sup>, Yajun Li<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Humanities and Management, Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xian yang, Shaanxi, China

**Abstract:** China is the first country in the world to grow, make and taste tea, and has a colorful tea culture. After absorbing some of the connotations of Chinese tea culture, the United Kingdom, through innovation and integration, has condensed a unique British tea culture. The two countries that both have tea have very different tea situations. This paper focuses on comparing the differences between the two countries at the level of the material culture in tea culture and exploring the reasons behind the differences.

## 1. Tea material form

Tea is a healthy drink that is popular all over the world, and tea culture as a kind of world culture has formed a representative Chinese tea culture in China, and the tea and tea drinking methods initially consumed by countries all over the world were spread directly or indirectly from China. Tea first entered the British market as a beverage that was a symbol of aristocratic status, and gradually became more popular with the development of transportation and expansion of trade. <sup>[1]</sup>The British never grew a single tea leaf, but used the imported product to create a unique content and elegant form of afternoon tea. British people made tea leaves and milk into a delicious and fragrant British tea, more tuned to the British tea culture different from the Chinese tea culture <sup>[2]</sup>. Due to the obvious differences in tea culture in different civilization forms, Chinese and British tea culture shows different physical forms and cultural meanings. Among them, physical culture is the most basic content of the elements of culture, is the first need, directly reflects the nature of culture, the level of civilization. In the tea culture is mainly reflected in the choice of tea leaves and tea, tea sets and refreshments, drinking environment and so on.

## 2. Chinese and English tea material form

### 2.1. Selection of tea leaves

According to different classification standards, Chinese people classify tea into different kinds, such as according to the origin of tea leaves or according to the time of tea maturity, the most mainstream classification method is currently divided into six kinds according to the different degrees of tea fermentation. There are six most basic types of tea: green tea, black tea, white tea, yellow tea, black tea and oolong tea. <sup>[3]</sup>Among the many teas, the Chinese

people's favorite is green tea and black tea, and green tea is the most representative tea in China, named "Green Tea" in English. Green tea is made from fresh tea leaves or young shoots without fermentation, processed by the process of killing, shaping and drying, which not only maintains the natural composition of fresh tea leaves, but also contains rich nutrition. Green tea is a non-fermented tea, therefore, the characteristics of green tea "clear soup green, strong taste", so that people can get a complete enjoyment in form, color and taste, in line with the traditional Chinese concept of "the unity of heaven and man, reverence for nature", and become the favorite tea products of the Chinese people. China's green tea production areas are very rich, including Henan, Guizhou, Jiangxi, Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Sichuan, and there are many kinds of green tea, such as Zhongyue Xian tea, Jian Ye, Mabian Yun Yan, and so on.

British tea, mainly black tea, there are also green tea, flower tea and other teas, but the British love black tea, called the "national drink" <sup>[4]</sup>. What made the British finally choose black tea? Firstly, the British historically introduced the new variety of tea in today's Guangdong and Fujian, and the southern regions of Guangdong and Fujian prefer black tea; secondly, the special geographical location of the Atlantic Ocean causes humidity and fog, and green tea will lose its original flavor if stored for too long, while fully fermented black tea will not lose its flavor over time, and this characteristic makes it suitable for long-distance transportation and storage; finally, black tea is mild in nature and has a warming effect on the stomach, milk, juice, wine and other ingredients can be added to black tea to suit different tastes, making it suitable for drinking in the cold autumn and winter months. For the rainy, dairy-friendly climate of the UK black tea is the best choice. Some of the more famous black teas in the UK are Assam, Earl Grey and white black tea.

\*2479655299@qq.com

## 2.2.Choice of tea

The Chinese people believe that only when tea and water are fully mixed can a good tea be made, so people also have strict requirements for the selection of tea water. Different tea made with different materials, different processing methods, the requirements for water are also different, the quality of the tea water has a great impact on the taste of tea. The Tang Dynasty tea master Lu Yu was the first person to write about how to choose tea water in his book, while Zhang Yuxin's Notes on Tea Brewing describes for the first time how to choose tea water based on the five brewing methods mentioned in the volume of Tea Sutra and the comments of the tea taster Liu Bodang, and classifies the water suitable for brewing tea into twenty categories. Compared with other tea water, spring water is still the most suitable for making tea, this is because spring water meets the five tea water standards of light, clear, sweet, cold and live, more famous spring water.<sup>[5]</sup>such as the first spring of Emperor Qianlong in Beijing Yuquan Mountain, the first spring of Daming Lake in Jinan, the first soup of the world in Anning Biyu Spring, etc. Tea drinking methods can be roughly divided into two categories: pure drinking and blending, pure drinking means brewing with water only, between the lips and teeth to experience the natural beauty, while blending refers to the addition of other condiments in the tea, such as sugar, milk and so on. Pure drinking is a unique Chinese Han way of drinking tea, which in ancient times symbolized the noble taste and spirit of the literati and was a reflection of pride. For example, the Chinese often drink green tea bubble tea method is very elaborate, pure drinking, quiet taste of silent appreciation of the true aroma and flavor of green tea, water temperature to 70-80 ° is appropriate, depending on the taste of the appropriate extension, should not be steeped for too long, the appropriate steeping time not only tea soup taste pleasant, but also increase the number of bubble resistance. Chinese ethnic minorities also have mixed drinking habits, the Mongolian people are used to adding dairy products to their tea, so that the tea is full of milky aroma and can also withstand the cold natural environment.

Compared to the Chinese who choose their tea very carefully, the British do it much more simply - just a pot of boiling water and only use the boiling water to brew the tea leaves. Although the British brewing tea water is more common, the type of water and temperature is not so much of a requirement, but the British people like to mix drinks in the tea often add milk, honey, cinnamon, whiskey, butter, eggs, lemon juice, etc., and the order of addition is very strict, for example, when drinking tea to add milk first, then add sugar, and can not spill the tea. Accompanied by the addition of milk, juice and other condiments and exquisite English desserts, for drinking tea added a lot of flavor. In the process of drinking tea, the British also transformed the shape of the tea leaves, the whole tea leaves pounded to powder, placed in the bag, the formation of the "bag tea" way of drinking tea, the world-famous "Lipton" tea is so produced, its convenient and easy to carry characteristics for People love. The British way of drinking tea reflects the

gentlemanly and strict attitude of the British.

## 2.3.Tea utensils and refreshments

China has a wide variety of tea, pay attention to color, flavor and shape, so you need some apparatus that can give full play to the quality of various types of tea, that is, tea utensils. Wang Bao, a lyricist in the Western Han Dynasty, said in "The Boy's Testament" that "Wuyang bought tea, and cooked all the tea utensils", which is the first historical record in China that mentions "tea utensils".<sup>[6]</sup> Chinese "tea set" refers to teapots, teacups, teaspoons, etc. There are many kinds of tea sets, and its classification methods are different, we can divide them into different materials: porcelain tea sets, alabaster tea sets, glass tea sets, and also divided into daily brewing tea sets and kung fu tea tea sets according to different uses. In use, people choose the most suitable tea set for themselves according to the environment and purpose. Chinese tea sets are diverse, beautiful in appearance, not only have practical value, but also have high artistic value, so they are well known at home and abroad, and are loved by tea drinkers for generations. Tea point is a kind of food developed in the process of tea tasting, exquisite, diverse flavors, small shape, small quantity, high quality, a wide variety, is the main food with tea. Tea point is a food, but also a flavor carrier, its rich connotations, after a long period of development, has formed a variety of very different styles. In the north, most of the refreshments appear in meetings and other more formal occasions, did not form a representative of the genre, while in the south, according to the different regions formed a different culture, such as the Canton style refreshments to snacks as the main, tea as a supplement, most of them are used to fill the stomach when eating, such as: barbecued wheat, shrimp dumplings, intestinal noodles, etc., and Chaoshan tea is mainly drinking tea, snacks are secondary, is the hospitality guests when drinking tea embellishment.

In Britain, the wind of tea drinking is led by the royal family, so the British tea culture from the beginning has a strong sense of court aristocracy, tea drinking also because the royal family aristocracy and become a symbol of respectable status recognized by the entire population.<sup>[7]</sup>Compared with Chinese tea sets, British tea sets are richer and more formal, mainly made of ceramic, although porcelain originated in China, but it is developing very quickly in Britain. English tea sets include cups, sugar bottles, milk cups, teaspoons, personal snack plates, tea knives, forks for tasting pastries, tea bowls, flowers, thermoses, and wooden plates. In addition, in the Victorian era, the nobles were required to use tablecloths or placemats with floral inlays and also decorated with beautiful decorations such as flowers, funnels, candles, photos, or ribbons tied on napkins with a piece of music. Compared with Chinese tea time, British tea time is not very rich, its composition form is single, the classic traditional afternoon tea time will be put in three layers of silver plate, the bottom is salty finger sandwiches, the middle is the typical English muffin, scones with butter and jam, the top is dessert

cake, macarons, cupcakes and so on.

## 2.4. Drinking environment

There are two main types of tea drinking environment in China - natural environment and man-made buildings, and man-made buildings can be divided into two levels of elegance and vulgarity [8]. Tea drinking in the natural environment is mostly the culture formed among the literati, such people pay attention to the "qin, chess, calligraphy, painting, poetry, wine, tea" interest, like to taste the spring tea deep in the forest, watch the clouds and listen to the sound, their love into the landscape, to achieve the realm of unity between heaven and man. However, in reality, deep forests and valleys in the tea drinking environment is rare, in order to meet market demand, man-made construction of tea drinking places on the historical stage, some restaurants began to provide "tea room", "teahouse", these places mainly for the nobility services The decorative style is elegant and expensive, focusing on the ornamental nature of tea. Commonplace tea places mainly refers to "tea booths", serving ordinary workers, decorated with casual and simple, such people value "rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar, tea" of sustenance, focusing on the practicality of tea.

In Britain there are two types of tea drinking environment and places --- home tea drinking places and public tea drinking places. In the shaping of the tea-drinking environment, British society in general emphasizes exquisite and high-class, out of the British social public's pursuit of a refined and luxurious life [9]. Tea drinking as a social way first appeared in the aristocratic women, idle time will be formed afternoon tea together to spend time, but also as a status symbol, because in that era, the high price of tea, ordinary people's consumption level is not enough level. Later, with the development of tea planting in Britain, the scale of tea continued to expand, the price decreased, ordinary people also have access to tea, there will be a variety of public tea drinking places. Regardless of the occasion, the British have tried to make everything decorated as much as possible more exquisite and gorgeous, fully reflecting the aristocratic mentality of the British, very national characteristics.

## 3. Second, China and Britain tea culture analysis

### 3.1. Cultural background

China is an ancient civilization with a history of 5,000 years, the historical heritage is very deep, but at the same time is located inland, relying on a stable small farmer economy to survive, which to a certain extent caused the Chinese culture has a certain conservative, resting on the status quo, it is difficult to innovate, it is difficult to absorb foreign factors, Chinese tea culture also retains more of the essence of traditional culture. Britain is very different from China on this point, due to its cultural heritage is shallow, insufficient accumulation, coupled

with its geographical location surrounded by sea, belongs to the open sea civilization, has been relying on plunder and war to expand the space for survival, good at absorbing the excellent culture of other countries. These two factors have made the British come into contact with Chinese tea culture after continuous innovation, in line with the local food habits on the basis of the formation of a unique British tea culture.

The origins of tea culture in the two countries are different, with the world's tea cultivation originating in China and China's tea cultivation originating in Sichuan. China is inland and has a large area of soil suitable for tea growth, forming a large-scale tea culturing industry. As early as thousands of years ago, Chinese people began to grow and drink tea. According to legend, as early as before Qin, only the people of Bashu would grow tea, until Qin Shi Huang unified the world, this custom began to spread from Sichuan, to the Western Han Dynasty, tea has changed from medicinal use to drinking, the Three Kingdoms in the Yangtze River area has formed the custom of drinking tea, to the Wei Jin and North and South Dynasties period, drinking tea became a social medium, and the formation of many folk customs. after the 17th century, tea was introduced to England, due to the navigation chart on the bumps and the nature of tea should not be preserved, tea quickly increased in value, the price is high, people look at tea as a treasure, only the upper aristocratic personnel have the opportunity to drink. In the beginning, there were few people for whom tea was suitable. Later, as people transformed the soil and produced a large amount of tea suitable for native growth, the price of tea dropped and the common people were able to access this beverage.

China advocates "clean drinking", while Britain advocates "mixed drinking". The same is the tea culture, but in these two aspects are very different, mainly for the following three reasons. First, time, before the middle of the Ming Dynasty, there was only one kind of tea under the sky: green tea. No matter what tea area, no matter what kind of tea tree, the fresh leaves picked down all make green tea, from the discovery of tea has been to the Ming and Qing dynasties, green tea is the most influential tea, the broadest audience; secondly, green tea is not fermented tea, clear drinking this way of drinking in line with the Chinese since ancient times the road to simplicity, respect for the natural world view, so in the dissemination process more smooth; finally, from the taste, the taste of green tea is relatively Single, mellow and mellow, even if people who do not like to drink tea can also accept. There are also three main reasons why Britain loves black tea and mixed drinks. First, the price of Chinese green tea has always been very high, the exclusive right to import Chinese tea was monopolized by an East India Company, so green tea is still a luxury, and can not open the market in the short term in the United Kingdom; second, the geographical location of the United Kingdom. The geographical location in the Atlantic Ocean produces a lot of humidity and fog, and the living environment makes the selection of British tea varieties more difficult. British people prefer fully fermented black tea, because green tea will lose its

original flavor if stored for too long, black tea will not lose its flavor over time, and this characteristic makes it suitable for long-distance transportation and storage; the third reason is the characteristics of black tea. Black tea is mild in nature and has a warming effect on the stomach, which makes it suitable for drinking in the cold autumn and winter months. Milk, juice, wine and other ingredients can also be added to black tea to suit different tastes. These qualities of black tea are loved by the British who are always in a rainy environment.

### 3.2.Value Orientation

Values are the fundamental starting point for determining the views people hold and the actions they take [10]. The Chinese are typically collectivist in their values. Collectivist values emphasize collective interest, focus on coordination, solidarity, and cooperation, and it focuses more on the group and on collective responsibility and norms than on individual thinking. When faced with conflicts, people often choose to avoid them and take the right measures at the right time to minimize losses. The whole connotation of Chinese tea culture is to guide us to live in harmony with others in a peaceful manner, to resolve conflicts with others by drinking tea, to "meet friends with tea", and to seek more friends through the method of drinking tea. This etiquette represents respect, it is both for the guest and for the host. When the Chinese socialize, they pay close attention to the content of the conversation, and if the other party only cares about their own boasts, without taking into account the views of others, such a move will make the listener feel disgusted. In such social situations, the listener mostly just recognizes on the surface, and even if he feels inwardly that the speaker is uncultured, he will not have a fit on the spot, which is a face-saving collective consciousness.

Britain is a country that upholds individualism. Personal values emphasize individual spirit, personal interest and personal achievement. In such a personal values, when people have conflicts, they will start from a competitive point of view. The British tea ceremony culture also contains such personal values, more than reflecting the British pursuit of aristocratic life, the pursuit of a good personal life. When entertaining friends at home, the host treats them with courtesy and the guests also treat them with courtesy, but unlike the Chinese, their manners are designed to avoid bringing shame to others. In a tea party, men and women will find a subject that everyone likes to talk about, so that the whole party can become more intimate, but the starting point of this behavior is not to take into account the thoughts of others as the Chinese do, but to save face by trying to make their tea party a great success. Individualistic people are more concerned about their own face, and do not care whether their words and actions will have an impact on others.

### 3.3.Philosophical philosophy

Philosophical philosophy is a human-specific ideology

that arises when humans engage in material culture, and is an intrinsic motivation for advancing material culture. The attitude of China and Britain towards tea and the different display of tea culture can reflect the different philosophical concepts of the two countries. The Chinese revere nature and emphasize the spiritual realm of returning to the basics. The British view of tea is more from the perspective of practical value to appreciate and select, from their own interests, expecting to show their talents and cultivation in tea tasting.

Berfan (2002) points out that "Chinese people value virtue, Taoism speaks of morality, Buddhism speaks of merit and virtue, Confucianism speaks of virtue, and the key point of the tea ceremony is to cultivate virtue with tea." Lu Yu, who is known as the "Saint of Tea", mentioned in his superb work that the Chinese attach great importance to personal moral cultivation when drinking tea. To this day, our country's tea culture still maintains the essence of the word "virtue". "Virtue" is the core of the spirit of the tea ceremony, and the "virtue" of the tea ceremony has a very important role in the improvement of people's moral character and morality. Chinese tea culture actually does not only attach importance to "virtue", but also to "and" and "ritual", which is the essence of Chinese tea culture, and is also the source of the inheritance of Chinese tea culture. "And" is an important part of traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese people have always attached importance to the unity of heaven and man, love of peace, the courage to fight. "And" is the tea culture "and" a manifestation of the people in the process of drinking tea to deepen understanding, resolve conflicts, and ultimately achieve "and". For example, in the southern minorities in China, there is "talk and tea" of the saying. "Ritual" is a Chinese culture, China has a long history, pay attention to etiquette, since 5,000 years, etiquette has been attached to the people. "Rites" refers to respect for elders, respect for elders, respect for etiquette and order. When drinking tea, from the moment people are seated, the meaning of "etiquette" is obvious, pouring tea for the young first, and then for the elderly. Many families teach their children that the first thing they should learn is to offer tea to their elders and serve tea to their guests. It is this heritage that has enabled our tea culture to maintain the original spirit of the art of tea through the ages.

The British have incorporated their national philosophy into their tea culture, the most representative of which is "etiquette", which can be reflected in their complex tea drinking etiquette. First of all, in terms of tea sets, British culture retains the original aristocratic atmosphere, generally using a patterned tablecloth or placemat, but also with some beautiful decorations to decorate, such as flowers, funnels, candles, showing elegance and refinement; secondly, depending on the time, the British will drink tea customs are divided into pre-dinner tea, rest tea, afternoon tea, evening tea, etc., of which afternoon tea is the most formal. Finally, when drinking tea, both the host and the guest should pay attention to their demeanor, not to have vulgar and rude actions, the slightest mistake will be ridiculed. The British also have a strong pragmatic spirit, in the tea set,

the British will improve the Chinese porcelain for bone china, bone china is animal bone charcoal mixed into the clay, after two baking and made. This tea set has a very good insulation effect, and it is a very light material, very resistant to wear and tear. When drinking tea, the British like to place some small snacks for wrapping their bellies, in order to meet the spiritual enjoyment brought to them by tea drinking, but also focus on the food to bring them a sense of material sufficiency. In addition, when it comes to drinking tea, all work must be suspended, which is also a manifestation of the British pragmatism.

#### 4. Conclusion

The physical culture of Chinese tea is pure and natural, highlighting the characteristics of small farmers' economy, while the physical culture of British tea is new and gorgeous, highlighting the characteristics of industrial civilization. In view of the differences between the two, a comparison is made in terms of physical culture, with China being typical and retaining the essence of the original tea culture, and Britain being innovative and incorporating the local aristocratic sentiment into tea culture. After comparing the two, it is found that the differences in cultural background and values have propelled the tea culture forward, and at the same time made a huge difference between Chinese and British tea culture

#### Fund Items

Research on the Inheritance and Development of Chinese Medicine Characteristic Culture of Shaanxi University Social Science Characteristic Discipline Project (Shaanxi Education Position [2009] No. 6); "Chinese Medicine Culture" of the "Twelfth Five-Year" Key Discipline of Chinese Medicine of the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (National Chinese Medicine Human Education Development [2012] No. 32).

#### References

1. Xu Minghao. The expansion of consumption space in 17th-18th century London [D]. Shanghai Normal University, 2022. DOI:10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2022.000988.
2. Chen Fachang. The formation and development of the aesthetic thought of English black tea [J]. Fujian tea,2017,39(02):371-372.
3. Chen Gou. The theory and practice of tea classification [J]. Tea Bulletin, 1979(Z1):48-56+94. DOI:10.16015/j.cnki.jteabusiness.1979.z1.010.
4. Peng Jing. A comparative study on the connotation of Chinese and English tea culture in material and spiritual aspects[J]. Fujian tea,2017,39(10):339-340.
5. Jia Wen. British tea culture and its influence [D]. Nanjing Normal University, 2008.
6. Dong Xiao. The Aesthetic Perspective of Chinese Tea Culture [D]. Shandong Agricultural University, 2012.
7. Xiao Xiaoyue, Peng Hua. A comparative study of Chinese and English tea culture under non-verbal communication[J]. Journal of Changchun University,2013,23(03):346-349.
8. Wang Ni. A comparison of Chinese and British tea culture in a cross-cultural perspective[J]. People's Forum,2011(34):142-143. DOI:10.16619/j.cnki.rmlt.2011.34.010.
9. Zhou Zhigang. A comparative study of Chinese tea culture and British tea culture[J]. Fujian tea,2021,43(04):287-288.
10. Hu Wenzhong: Introduction to intercultural communication [M], Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1999 edition