



Analysis of tea dissemination in the context of the new stage of "the Belt and Road" 2.0

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Abstract. In the past ten years, the great strategic concept initiative of "The Belt and Road" has entered a stage of high quality development. In order to strengthen cultural exchanges, the international dissemination of Chinese traditional culture has provided new historical opportunities for development. This paper takes tea as the starting point, and analyzes the situation of Chinese traditional industries and cultural communication under the opportunity of the "The Belt and Road". Strive to coordinate and arrange various resources in the cultural output of traditional industries in China, and strive to promote strengths and avoid weaknesses.

Keywords: "The Belt and Road"; tea culture; cultural communication

1 Introduction

Since the "the Belt and Road" was proposed, more than 150 countries and 32 international organizations have signed more than 200 cooperation documents with China on the joint construction of the "the Belt and Road" in more than 200 countries and regions around the world. The co built countries have extended from Asia and Europe to regions such as Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, including the vast majority of developing countries and some developed countries. The achievements are fruitful, the advantages are significant, and the vitality is very strong. In the special period of the epidemic, it is still developing vigorously, opening up new horizons for China's opening up and development. With the continuous expansion of the circle of friends, the "the Belt and Road" is moving towards high-quality development, that is, larger scale, higher level, richer content and deeper exchanges. At this moment, we have already passed the darkest moment of fighting the epidemic, but the global economic downturn is still ongoing, whether it is a crisis or an opportunity. With the progress made in recent years, there are also some challenges and risks to be faced. The "the Belt and Road" in the post epidemic era faces both the need for change and the opportunity for upgrading.

The goal of the "the Belt and Road" is not only a trade road, an economic corridor, but also a road of civilization integration of agriculture, commerce, arts and humanities.

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We should spread Chinese culture and export traditional industries under this historical opportunity, win the most friends with the most sincere communication in the face of the epidemic and catastrophe, and let the world understand and know China correctly. Tea in China combines the diverse cultural connotations of traditional Chinese farming culture, Chinese medicine, commerce, art, folklore, the context of the times and even Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The derivatives of tea include porcelain, calligraphy and painting, poetry, and even tea recipes, tea food, tea drinking rituals, and tea room building environment, which cover China's rich climatic environment, ethnic cultures, communication characteristics, social foundation, historical factors, and diverse fields of ideology and philosophy, and are an important carrier for the formation, development, accumulation, and inheritance of traditional Chinese culture. Taking tea as the entry point for spreading Chinese culture, it is suitable for countries and regions along the "the Belt and Road" to understand China and highlight its significance and value.

This article analyzes the situation of the external dissemination of Chinese tea from the aspects of its own advantages, phenomena and problems, and reasons and countermeasures. It seeks to provide theoretical support and strategic advice on the future development of this field in China.

2 Great country of tea culture

2.1 Historical accumulation

China has a long history of tea and a profound tea culture. Starting from "Shen Nong tasted all kinds of herbs, encountered 72 poisons a day, and obtained tea solutions", after four thousand years, tea has gone from being eaten raw for medicinal purposes, cooked for cooking and drinking to being brewed and consumed now; the use of customs and planting techniques originated from the earliest three southwestern provinces and spread throughout the country with the migration of tribes. During the Tang and Song dynasties, tea was even more popular in the prosperous era, becoming the national drink of tea. It can be said that "Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, drinking tea from ancient times to the present day."

Folk saying since ancient times, "The seven things that happen when you open your door are firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy, vinegar, and tea.", "crude tea and simple food ", tea, as a common material of daily life, has long become a necessity for the people. On the other hand, "the eight elegant things of the ancients - guqin, weiqi, calligraphy, painting, poetry, wine, flowers and tea, those who are good at playing guqin are open-minded and composed, those who are good at weiqi are scheming and wise, those who are good at calligraphy are passionate and natural, those who are good at painting are perfect and beautiful, those who are good at poetry are melodious to their hearts, those who are good at drinking are in love with their confidants, those who are good at tea cultivate their emotions, and those who are good at flowers have a pleasant character." Tea, as a tool for literat and Buddhists to cultivate their character, has been endowed with aesthetic and even philosophical value. In the thousands of years of feudal society, tea quietly infiltrated into various strata of traditional Chinese society,

from princes and scholars, down to ordinary people. It can be said that tea, with both material and cultural attributes, bridged the huge space for the polarization of feudal society in China.

2.2 External communication

Tea originated in China. Internationally, the scientific names of plants are in Latin, consisting of genus and species names. In 1753, botanist Linnaeus named the scientific name of the tea tree *Camellia Siemsenii* (L.) Kuntze. *Siemsenii*, meaning Chinese tea tree, translates to "a plant of the genus *Camellia* native to China". There are over 160 countries with a population of about 3 billion drinking tea, and over 60 countries growing tea in the world. China was the earliest to grow and drink tea. Tea trees, tea leaves and production technology and drinking methods in other countries were directly or indirectly imported from China. The pronunciation of tea in various countries around the world has also evolved from the dialects of northern and southern China. The pronunciation of cha in Russian, Japanese, Korean, and Indian languages is directly translated from the pronunciation of tea. The pronunciation of tea (or similar) in European and American countries is directly translated from the pronunciation of tea (Tea) in Minnan language.

As early as the Middle Tang Dynasty, tea from China began to spread to the Korean Peninsula, and there is still a sculpture commemorating the "first cultivation site of tea" at Jiye Mountain in Zhiye Mountain in Jinluo Road, Korea. In Japan, tea seeds were brought to Japan from the late Tang Dynasty by Zen master Jicheng, and during the Northern Song Dynasty by Rongxi Monk. During the Ming Dynasty, Portuguese missionaries began to bring tea from our country. Princess Catherine was fond of drinking tea and married Emperor Charles II in 1662, advocating for royal tea drinking, which led to the trend of tea drinking in England. During the reign of George I, Chinese tea began to enter the London market in large quantities, and tea drinking became popular throughout the UK. Afterwards, it was transported to European countries such as Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Hungary, etc. At the same time, Britain also transported tea to American colonies, including India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Africa, and so on. Tea cultivation and large-scale planting were also completed in that period, from Asia into Europe in the 1880s, into the African continent at the beginning of the 20th century, into the Americas in the 1920s, and into Oceania at the same time. It can be said that the tea, tea planting techniques, and tea drinking customs of other countries in the world all originated from China.

3 Small country of tea commerce

3.1 The largest tea production and consumption market

China is the world's largest producer and consumer of tea. In 2019, the total global tea production was nearly 6 million tons, with China reaching 2.7934 million tons, accounting for 45%, far exceeding India's 1.39 million tons and Kenya's 459,000 tons,

which ranked second and third. According to data from iiMedia Research[1], China's tea production reached 3.18 million tons in 2021, an increase 8.5% year-on-year.

Correspondingly, with the continuous increase in tea production, the market size of China's tea industry has also maintained a continuous growth trend. In 2019, the sales revenue of the domestic tea market was 273.95 billion yuan, with an annual consumption of 2,025,600 tons and an average consumption price of 139 yuan per kilogram. In 2021, the market size reached 291.03 billion yuan, and it is expected to reach 321 billion yuan by 2022. According to research data, the tea consumption population is 490 million people, with an average annual income of over 500 yuan per person. Nearly 50% of Chinese consumers drink tea every day, and the concept of drinking tea for health and wellness is deeply rooted in people's hearts.

According to China customs statistics, in 2019, China exported 366,500 tons of tea and imported 44,300 tons. It can be said that in terms of tea, we are a major producer, consumer, exporter, importer, and cultural powerhouse.

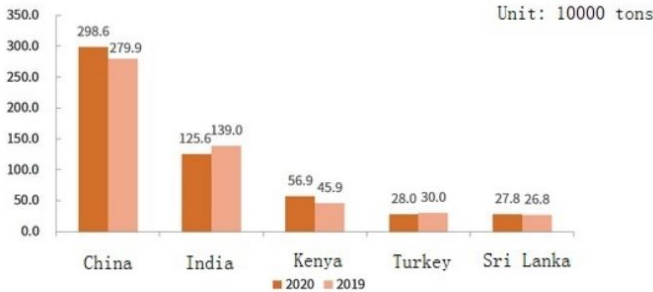


Fig. 1. Distribution of main domestic tea production in the world from 2019 to 2020[2]

3.2 Large not strong

China's tea production has consistently ranked first in the world for many years, nearly double that of India, which is second place (Figure 1). As the largest producer of tea, we have to face an awkward fact: In the international market, China cannot even compare with countries such as Sri Lanka and India that originally did not produce tea. In 2019, the RCA index of Chinese tea was 1.79¹, while the RCA index of Indian tea was 6.36. The TC index of the top five tea producing countries has a score of 0.8 for the other four, while China only has a score of 0.1².

¹ RCA, Indicative Comparative Advantage Index, an international trade academic term specifically used to measure the most persuasive indicator of a country (region) or an industry in trade. Typically, a country's products or industry are greater than 2.5, indicating that the country's industry has a strong competitive advantage in the international market.

² TC index (Trade Competitiveness), also known as the Trade Competitiveness Index, is one of the commonly used measurement indicators for international competitiveness analysis. The closer the value is to 0, the closer the competitiveness is to the average level; When the index is 1, it indicates that the industry only exports and does not import. The closer it is to 1, the greater its competitiveness.

In 2019, the average export price of China was 5.51 US dollars per kilogram, while the average export price of Japan was 27.3 US dollars, France was 21.38 US dollars, Germany was 10.98 US dollars, and the UK was 7.11 US dollars. Horizontal comparison indicates that there are issues with the export quality of low-end or unprocessed tea in China. In the processing phase, there are 66000 tea processing enterprises in China, with an average annual processing capacity of 340000 tons per enterprise, and the proportion of deep precision processing is only 6%. Although there are a large number of Chinese tea enterprises, many are small and medium-sized private enterprises, and the tea making process is relatively primitive, mainly manual frying-based, with a low level of standardization. In addition, Chinese people love to drink spring tea, but no one cares about summer and autumn tea. The immature development of tea deep processing and low utilization rate result in a large amount of waste of summer and autumn tea. Japan has developed tea into four major uses: tea beverage, tea medicine, tea food, and industrial supplies. According to data from the International Tea Commission, the per capita tea consumption in Japan has reached 3.03kg, which is 2.05 times that of China[3]. In addition China's tea plantations account for 60% of the world's area, tea yield 55.8 kg per mu, only 40% of India[4].

According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture in 2020[5], there are over 70 million employees in China's tea industry, including 26 million tea farmers, 33 million tea pickers, and over 11 million people in the processing and circulation sectors. The sales revenue of the domestic tea market is 273.95 billion yuan, and even if cost is not included, the annual income of 3900 yuan, only in line with the standard of poverty alleviation.

4 Large market and small brand

4.1 With category, without brand

Although China has the world's largest tea production and market, its product quality is inconsistent, lacks standardization, lacks branding, lacks transparency in the upstream and downstream of the tea industry, and there is a chaotic scene in the middle circulation channels. The ambiguous identification standards and unpredictable pricing methods have led to uneven consumer markets. Additionally, only know the tea variety without recognising the brand. China, relying on its unique geographical and climatic advantages, has become the only country to produce six major types of tea, namely green, red, green, black, white, and yellow, based on the degree of fermentation. It contains thousands of varieties, with consumption standards ranging from high to low. The diversity of Chinese tea is also absolutely the first among tea producing countries in the world. In this context, most Chinese tea enterprises maintain a small farmer economy and agricultural mindset, without focusing on unified standards and brand building. At present, except for a few category led brands, there are no strong cross category brands emerging. The tea market in China is still in a state of disorderly competition, with no single enterprise occupying 2% of the market share. Most of them are regional brands of small and medium-sized enterprises, without well-known brands

nationwide, and there are no world-class black tea brands like Twinings and Lipton in the UK.

“Nearly 70000 tea companies in China are not as good as Lipton[6],” according to the Economic Daily. British tea giant Lipton, with only black tea, had sales of \$2.9 billion in 2019, higher than the total export value of Chinese tea companies of \$2.175 billion in the same year. In 2017, People's Daily published an article titled "Breaking the Dilemma of ‘Thousands of Tea Enterprises less than one Lipton’”[7].

In the international market, the popularity of Chinese tea is very limited. According to data released by TechNavio, a large global technology research consultancy, the top 10 tea companies in the world in 2018 were basically ranked by countries such as the UK, the US, and India, with no one belonging to China (Figure 2).

Sort	Tea Company	Brand	Country
1	Tata Global Beverages	Tata tea	India
2	Unilever	Lipton. Tazo	UK
3	Associated British Foods Plc	Twings	UK
4	Nestle	Nestea	Switzerland
5	ITO EN	O! Ocha	Japan
6	Barry's tea	Barry's tea	Ireland
7	Dilmah	Dilma tea	Sri Lanka
8	Celestial Seasonings	Celestial Seasonings	US
9	Harney & Sons Tea	Harney & Sons	US
10	The Republic of Tea	The Republic of Tea	US

Fig. 2. Top 10 Global Tea Companies and Major Brands[8]

In addition, there are two types of tea brands, one is product brands and the other is channel brands. Currently, the most successful development in China is channel brands. Taking Tianfu as an example, there are over 600 chain stores in the country[9]. The expansion of chain scale can only to some extent indicate the expansion of tea marketing channels and the success of enterprise market management. But the establishment of a product brand encompasses the commercialization and standardization of tea, including the yield, labor efficiency, and organizational level of tea, the control ability of tea resources (especially high-quality resources), and even the deep processing of tea products, cultural and creative products with tea as the theme. In response to these aspects, the construction of tea product brands in China is clearly weak.

Brand is the carrier of product information, the standard for identifying product value, and the lazy bag for consumers to make purchasing decisions. Lipton has achieved popularization, standardization, price transparency, unified taste, stable quality, and fixed price. In theory, brand building is built through spiritual and cultural accumulation. The larger the brand, the greater the dissemination efficiency, and the more it can influence external purchases. Chinese tea never lacks a value model and an efficiency model. So it is urgent to use industrial processes to make tea and simplify the difficulty of consumers' choices.

4.2 Traditional models baptised in modern production

Why is it difficult for China's tea industry to become a leader in the industry? The core reason is why it is difficult to standardize Chinese tea. In 1930, the CT Crolling ma-

chine was invented, which defined one of the current mainstream black tea production methods in the world. From shredding, rolling, to fermentation and drying, production was carried out in a large-scale and mechanized manner, with lower costs. Although there are different origins and raw materials, different years and seasons, they can still maintain stability, and all tea bags achieve a single flavor. The secret is that Lipton's tea blending department has set fixed standards for over 500 aromatic substances. In order to achieve stable standardization, Lipton thoroughly industrialized agricultural products and was jokingly referred to as a seasoning company dressed in tea. The most direct result of the scale effect of industrialization is its low cost, becoming a tea sold to the world, and Lipton has become popular worldwide with modern standards.

The black tea produced by CTC has significant flavor issues, such as poor flavor, rough processing, and loss of the original flavor of the black tea. Although it can blend stable flavors, it stifles the diversity of tea flavors, making it difficult to sell at high prices due to the mediocrity. Essentially, all overly industrialized food processing inevitably results in a loss of flavor, which is the cost of standard assembly lines. The modern model represented by Lipton is suitable for mass production, meeting the needs of ordinary consumers, mechanical picking, and standardized production. From the perspective of product classification in marketing, Lipton is a convenience product with low prices and multiple sales channels.

The traditional mode of production in China is based on small-scale farmers, who can accurately measure the age, altitude, rainfall, tea picking time, and cooking temperature of each tree, combined with the stories of tea trees and even tea makers. After numerous buffs, tea is not only a thirst quenching and refreshing drink, but also a carrier of ideological wisdom and cultural spirit, embodying the Chinese way of thinking, national memory, spiritual concepts, and cultural inheritance. The traditional refinement model of Chinese tea differs significantly from the standard framework of modern assembly lines favored by international consumers. Taking Longjing tea as an example, one kilogram of tea requires at least one worker to stir fry 30000 sprouts, resulting in high labor costs and a lack of price competitiveness, making it difficult to expand its scale and form a popular brand. But the value lies in scarcity, which has the function of cellaring and appreciation, making it easy to create investment attributes. From this, it can be seen that the traditional model is suitable for refining and catering to the needs of high-end consumers.

This type of Chinese tea belongs to the selective distribution of selected products, and we should conduct scientific grading to prevent Lipton from overwhelming one industry in China. To accept the baptism of scientific production models - the hands of tea picking girls cannot match those of machine picking; Master brewing is not as good as consistent taste; Oral promises of pure nature are not as good as strict safety testing standards. The contradiction between the traditional localized production thinking of Chinese tea and the modern international standard logic has become an important factor hindering the external dissemination of Chinese tea. While Chinese tea enthusiasts are constantly searching for the standardization of good Chinese tea, it is urgent to explore different brewing methods for each type of tea, based on Chinese tradition and international standards, and achieve "internationalization of traditional methods" to help

consumers easily obtain relatively good flavors, while also combining modern life rhythm.

5 Conclusion

In 2013, President Xi proposed the concept of the "Belt" (the Silk Road Economic Belt) when he visited Kazakhstan, and the "One Road" (the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road) when he visited Indonesia. Since then, the "the Belt and Road" has become the focus of the world.

In the past decade, remarkable achievements have been made: China has become the world's largest manufacturing country, with a total manufacturing output value exceeding the total value of the three major manufacturing countries of the United States, Japan, and Germany; The China-Europe Express has officially opened, increasing from the initial 17 high-speed trains to 15000 in 2021. As of 2022, the China-Europe Express connecting World has operated a total of 60000 trains, with a cargo value of 300 billion US dollars; The cumulative trade in goods between China and countries along the route has exceeded 12 trillion US dollars. From January to April this year, China's export share to the "the Belt and Road" countries exceeded the sum of the United States, Europe, Japan and other developed countries for the first time[10]. The regionalization of the RMB is also accelerating with its development. China's "the Belt and Road" is not an abstract concept ten years ago[11], but has entered a new stage of 2.0.

There are many countries along the "the Belt and Road" and diverse people. China's product and cultural output, because of its distance from its lifestyle and psychological expectations, is out of the scope of daily experience and concern[12]. Due to the lack of common emotions and low value identification and emotional resonance, tea dissemination needs to overcome the obstacles caused by cultural differences and reduce the risk of encountering cultural discounts. Since the Silk Road became an important trade and cultural channel for China thousands of years ago, tea has been an important trade product on the Silk Road. With its profound accumulation and spiritual creation, it is widely recognized as a cultural memory and symbolic symbol. Witnessed the cooperative concept of multi ethnic, multi religious, and shared peace, openness, diversity, and common development between China and countries along the Belt and Road. Under the current once-in-a-century opportunity, we should reflect and summarize the achievements and shortcomings of current development, connect with the international development of the tea industry, and promote tea culture. How to win the most friends with the most sincere and effective communication, use Chinese style writing methods, tell our own stories through tea, and make traditional culture provide beneficial assistance for national strategic planning. New challenges and topics have been raised regarding how China will showcase its future in the fields of trade and cultural dissemination.

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