

# The manufacturing and drinking arts in the Song dynasty.

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## Summary

Crumbly-cake tea was the main form of tea production in the Song period, and it was steamed green tea. It had mainly six working procedures: plucking, picking, steaming, grinding, compressing, and baking. The various particular standards in each procedure formed the character of tea in the Song period, which was obviously different from tea in the Tang period.

Corresponding to the shape of dust tea, the leading style of tea drinking in the Song period was called pointing tea, which had five steps, such as compressed tea grinding, sieving tea, optimizing the tea brewing, warming cup by fire, and pointing tea. Each of the five steps requires special utensils. It is only all the steps did its best can the tea infusion be fine. Fenchu (tea game) and Doucha (tea competition) was the artistic, emulative form of pointing tea, all of which correlated to the leisurely and elegant lives of literati in Song China.

In the course of tea culture history, pointing tea, the drinking art of the Song period, formed a connecting link between boiling tea of the Tang period and brewing tea of the Ming and Qing periods. Pointing tea was spread to Japan and other countries and areas from China in the Song period, making its particular contribution to the tea culture of the world.

## Keywords

dust tea, manufacturing, drinking arts, the Song dynasty

Under the joint affection of the change of tea manufacturing style and social spiritual value orientation, compared with the Tang dynasty, the tea art of the Song dynasty had made fairly development on some procedure of tea manufacturing, style of tea shape, art of pointing tea, tea utensils, the standard of appreciation etc., far more delicate than the later, which made the Song dynasty the special historic period with distinct style in Chinese tea culture history. It formed a connecting link between proceeding and the following, at the same time, made deep influence on the forming of the tea style (Chadao) of Japan.

## 1, Manufacturing procedure of dust tea in Song dynasty

In the more than two thousand history of tea manufacturing and drinking, tea experienced the following different stages as no processing, rough processing, delicate processing and industrial manufacturing. Various tea processing style, combined with various culture of tea drinking and tea art in different periods endowed the tea itself with different attached value, which set the different quality of tea and the concerned idea of top-grade tea with the interaction of different agricultural criterions of tea itself.

Mainly, there were six working procedures in the manufacturing of dust tea in Song dynasty: plucking, picking, steaming, grinding, compressing and baking, while there were only five basic procedures from tea picking to shaped tea in Tang period: Plucking, steaming, pounding, beating and baking. The basic procedures of tea manufacturing in the Song dynasty was the same as in Tang period, but there were difference in detail, which were the just development of the tea in Song dynasty.

The first procedure was tea plucking. The plucking condition was highly demanded in Song period. First, the weather should be the "slightly cold early Spring", "cloudy but not freeze, sunny but not hot". Second, the exact moment of plucking should be the dawn before sun rising. Third,

tea should be plucked with fingertip instead of finger body, protecting tea from the physical damage and sweat pollution. Whether scientific or not, in a whole, all these demands reflected the understanding of the relationship between the raw tea and the shaped tea in Song period.

Compared with the complicated demand of tea plucking condition in the Song dynasty, demands in the Tang dynasty seemed to be so simple. Reading from *Tea Classics*, no much attention was paid on tea plucking in Tang dynasty except plucking tea in fine day without clouds. From the first step of tea manufacturing, that Song people attached great importance to the quality of the tea was well reflected

After tea plucking, before tea steaming, for the tribute tea, there was another procedure, tea picking. Tea picking was to pick out the parts which might damage the color and taste of the tea such as Baihe, Wudi, Daoye and Zhiye. This special procedure evolved to be the classification on the quality of raw tea at last. The highest grade of the raw tea was named as Doupin, Yapin, which was the bud tea as little as the sparrow tongue or the grain. The next highest grade was named as picked-out tea (jiancha). The following grade was the ordinary tea, the Chaya. The grades of the raw tea set the grades of the shaped tea that were made from the former.

After several-time washing on the picked out tea, the third procedure was coming up: steaming. Though the basic style of steaming was the same in Tang and Song periods, the temperature control was paid more attention in later period. Tea shouldn't be steamed insufficiently ripe, and shouldn't be steamed too ripe, otherwise, the color of the tea infusion will be influenced.

The Fourth procedure tea grinding, same as the third procedure, pounding, in Tang period, was to make the leaf tea the dust tea. Ordinary tea would be grinded just after tea steaming and washing, while the tribute tea, the JianAn tea would be pressed before grinding to make the tea ointment out, which was one of the most important procedures.

Strict demands were set on the grinding procedure. Time spent on grinding was the important parameter of the quality of shaped tea. More time grinding with water, fine the tea, more higher the quality of the tea would be.

Tea grinding and tea pounding both need water. Water quality was regarded as the important condition for the tea quality. With the influence of the idea that making high-qualified tea need special water source, many fairy tales concerned with the water for the tribute tea came into being at the places of tribute tea production in Tang and Song periods.

The fourth procedure was tea compressing, putting dust tea into some model to get the shaped tea.

The last procedure was tea braking, same in Tang period. Material and the temperature were paid great attention in Song Period. Charcoal, with its well-rounded fire, without smoke, was regarded as the best material for tea baking. As for the time spent on baking, it was concerned with the thickness of the shaped tea, tea cake.

Generally speaking, in the Tang dynasty, the new tea was just regarded as the best tea, other elements attached to the product from the processing art were fairly little. While the processing of the top-grade tea of the Song dynasty, with the great plunge of labor power, financial resources, attached more value to the tea itself, which left deep brand in the idea of high-qualified tea.

As for the manufacturing of the leaf tea, there were four main procedures that were recorded in the *Nongshu* written by Wangzhen of the Yuan dynasty: plucking, steaming, rolling and baking. Basically, it was the same as the tea manufacturing style from Ming and Qing periods to Modern time, which manifested the important status of tea manufacturing style of the Song dynasty in the history of tea.

## **2, Drinking arts of dust tea in Song period**

In the process of drinking arts of tea, pointing tea, the drinking art of the Song period, formed a connecting link between boiling tea of the Tang period and brewing tea of the Ming and Qing periods. Pointing tea was spread to Japan and other countries and areas from China in the Song period, making its particular contribution to the tea culture of the world.

### **Pointing tea**

There existed many methods of tea drinking before the middle of the Northern Song. Pointing

tea was originally a local tea competition method in Jianan prefecture. Along with the establishment of tribute tea system of Beiyuan, Jianan tea was generally acknowledged the most famous tea. Introduced by *Chalu* written by Caixian in the ages of Huangyou, appreciated by the emperor Renzhong, highly esteemed by literati, pointing tea became the leading style of tea drinking swiftly. We can see nowadays every steps of pointing tea from *Chalu* and *Daguanchalun* written by the emperor Huizhong and other writings of the Song period.

**Grinding tea.** First, broke the tea cake packed in clean paper into pieces. Then ground tea pieces into dust in iron-mill. If it could be made quickly, tea dust would be good to keep its white color and pure taste. If it took too long time, its color would be damaged by the iron-mill.

**Sieving tea.** Sifting tea dust to make it fine. The more fine tea dust was, the more good tea infusion was.

**Optimizing the water boiling.** This step consisted of water selecting and water boiling. Not like people of the Tang dynasty who were very exigent of the fame of water, people of the Song dynasty paid more attention to water quality. All sorts of floating water which was light, clean and sweet were thought good for brewing tea. It's hard to watch the water's boiling degree. If the water were not enough boiling, there would be froth on the surface of the tea infusion. If the water were too boiling, tea dust would sink down to the bottom. In the Southern Song Linajin concluded that the water after the second boiling and at the beginning of the third boiling was best to making tea.

**Warm cup by fire.** To warm cup by fire before making tea would help tea dust float up to the surface of the tea infusion and keep more long time. This step has become a habit in China and Japan of warming tea utensils with boiling water that will activate tea throw off its smell.

**Pointing tea.** Put proper tea dust in bowl, poured few boiling water in them, mixed them into well-proportioned ointment. Then poured more boiling water into bowl while, beated and brushed the tea froth with tea spoon or tea bamboo broom constantly. Repeat pouring, beating and brushing seven times until tea infusion was pretty well.

#### **Fencha (Tea game)**

Fencha was a specific tea art which first appeared during the Wudaishiguo period, when it was also called tea game. Taogu had written down words in his *Qinyilu* in the early years of the Northern Song dynasty as followed: "Tea began to be properous from the Tang dynasty. In recent years, there were people who could play tea game. When poured boiling water into the tea bowl, they beated and brushed the tea froth with tea spoon with their specific skill to make the froth floating on the surface appear various designs such as bird, beast, insect, fish, flower, grass, all these looked like fine painting, but disappeared immediately. It was magical perform of tea, and was called tea game."

We can learn from poetry and writing of the Song dynasty that the skill of making froth appear various designs was called Fencha in the early period of the Northern Song dynasty.

In the Tang dynasty the word Fencha meant to distribute the boiled tea to bowls prepared equally, which differed with that in the Song dynasty completely. Fencha of the Song dynasty would be looked on as the ascensive skill to pointing tea. The common pointing tea only needed the person beated and brushed the tea froth with tea spoon or tea bamboo broom constantly while poured boiling water into bowl to make the tea froth spilled. If the tea froth was brushed upon along with the inner side of the bowl, the pointing tea was very successful. But Fencha needed the person beated and brushed the tea froth with tea spoon or tea bamboo broom to make the froth floating on the surface appear present various designs such as landscape, vert, flower and bird, fish and insect; ect.. The skill of Fencha was very hard to grasp and it's very optional, it was canonized by the literates of the Song dynasty and became one of their leisurely and comfortable activities, it even was looked as a specific skill that can be referred to activities as chess, handwriting, playing musical instrument.

#### **Doucha (Tea competition)**

Competing tea was a popular local convention in Jianzhou area from the Late-Tang and Wudaishiguo period. Fengzhi of the Tang dynasty said in his *Jishizhu*: "People of Jianzhou called tea competition Mingzhan." In Song Dynasty, Jianzhou tea was contributed to the court, the drinking art of competing tea was well known, received and used by people of the whole country. The pith of competing tea is identifying which kind of tea is better though observe the color and

the degree of floating.

As to the tea colors' competition, white is better. Caixiang had said: "The fallow-white tea infusion looks dim and dull, and the cyan-white one looks clear and bright, so that the cyan-white tea infusion prevailed over the fallow-white one in the tea competition in Janan area." And Huizhong emperor said: "The pure-white tea infusion is the top-grade, the cyan-white one takes the second place, the pale-white one is next, and the fallow-white one is next to all."

As to the tea floating' competition, Caixiang thought the one which water mark could not be seen was best. If one's froth on the brewing tea could persist to the inner side of tea bowl more long time, it would win the competition. And the one which water mark appeared first was the loser. This was described in many poems of Song period such as: "Brewing new tea and competing tea is to making persistent froth on the brewing tea", "Froth piles up like mixed flowers to cover the water mark", "The one which water mark just one line appears first is the loser", and so on.

Competing tea in the Northern Song was compared the color and floating, it's differ from comparing the taste. The picture painted by Liusongnian named "*Competing to sell tea in tea Garden*" was drawn about the competing tea of the Southern Song. There was a middle-aged man looked by all the other people who hold a bowl in his left hand, with thoughtful expression on his face, as if he had just drink up the tea and was tasting it, two men faced him were waiting for his response eagerly. The picture indicated that the pith of competing tea in the Southern Song was comparing the taste, which was varied from that comparing the color and floating in the Northern Song. So we can say the piths of competing tea in different period was dissimilar in the Song dynasty.

But these two methods of competing tea were not continues, they existed together for many periods. It is to say during that the most time of Song dynasty, people competing tea not only by observing it's white color and floating froth but also tasting its sweet-smelling and flavor. When pointing tribute tea white was better, yet the folk people used green tea more. So in the drinking arts of tea in the Song dynasty canonization to white tea and green tea were coexisted.

Except pointing tea, Fencha and competing tea, there were two other drinking methods as boiling tea and brewing tea in the Song dynasty. Boiling tea was the inheritor of drinking method of the Tang dynasty, it also was the inheritor of leading-style drinking way from fore ages. Brewing tea was a method that dunks the leaf tea directly. The leafy tea was already used during the Tang dynasty, yet the method was boiling them in boiler. When the age tuned into the Yuan dynasty, the method of dunking tea was used in Hangzhou city of Zhejiang province, this method was same as the dominant drinking way for a long time until now.

The tea arts of the Song dynasty focusing on the shape and drinking methods of tea formed a connection linking between the preceding and the following in China tea culture history. In the Tang dynasty dust tea was used widely, but in the Song dynasty caky tea and leafy tea existed largely at the same time, which based for the dominant place of leafy tea. Boiling tea in Tang, pointing tea in Song, when the pointing dust tea faded out little by little, the method of brewing leafy tea became the leading style. In the history of China tea culture, tea arts of Song dynasty not only formed the specific culture itself but also supplied the provision of practicality and concept for the transition of tea culture between the Tang and Ming dynasties. And pointing tea was spread to Japan and other countries and areas from China in the Song period, making its particular contribution to the tea culture of the world.