The Spread and Changes of Tea and Tea Drinking Customs in Minority Areas of North and the Tibetan Plateau in China

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There is currently no consensus on when Chinese people began to drink tea. The way people drank tea before the Tang Dynasty was controversial in the tea academic community due to insufficient historical materials. Since the Tang Dynasty, tea drinking became popular in the hinterland. Due to climate and soil condition restrictions, acidic soil areas south of the Qinling Mountains and the Huai River were main tea producing area. Therefore, the ethnic groups in northern frontier areas must obtain tea through trading with inland tea areas. Therefore, tea was introduced into northern minority areas and the Tibetan Plateau relatively late. It was not until the Song Dynasty that there were precise records on tea drinking by northern ethnic minorities, and tea-horse trade became an important form of material exchange between agricultural and nomadic peoples at that time. In addition to well-known tea-horse trade between Song and northwest Tibet, Liao, Jin and other northern kingdoms also exchanged tea with the Song Empire in frontier trade. Tea-horse trade became an important material exchange channel between the Central Plains and nomadic peoples at that time. In the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongols dominated the Central Plains, and coexisted with Han and other ethnic groups, inevitably leading to cultural and customs exchanges and integration. One of the manifestations is that the Mongols who went south of the Great Wall began to drink tea generally and integrated the tea drinking method and customs of the Han people in the Central Plains with their own lifestyle. They added dairies favored by nomadic peoples to tea and gave rise to butter tea or milk tea. After the establishment of the Ming Dynasty, the inland Han people no longer drank butter tea, while the Mongols who retreated north of the Great Wall maintained their tea drinking customs.

Keywords: tea, nomadic peoples, Tibetans, Tibetan Plateau

THE ORIGIN OF TEA AND ITS POPULARIZATION IN THE HINTERLAND

There is currently no consensus on when Chinese people began to drink tea. With the development of the times, due to processing or non-processing and different processing techniques, it has roughly gone through a process of change from big-leaved tea, sliced tea, blocky tea to loose strip tea. During the process of underground burial with the vegetative leave-over of tea, especially in humid environments, organic matter in the plant will degrade gradually, making it difficult to preserve tealeaves as plant leaves. This is also the main reason why there are few tealeaf samples in archeological discoveries in different places in the world. However, new archeological discoveries keep refreshing people's understanding of the history of tea making and drinking customs. We can learn and understand the tea drinking customs of different periods, and outline its spreading process from various literatures, tea utensils, funerary items, murals, brick portraits, calligraphy and painting works that have been passed down or unearthed in fieldwork.

Tea residue is found in the rotten and carbonized grain relic unearthed from outer burial pit K15 of the mausoleum of Emperor Jing of the Western Han Dynasty at the east end of Xianyang, Shaanxi (Jiao et al. 2008), which is the earliest real tea discovered archeologically to date, and certified as the earliest real tealeaf in the world by Guinness World Records (Lu et al. 2016). Archeologists speculate that this was tea drank by the emperor, but important information such as how it was drunk or eaten, whether it was food or medicine, and where it came from are unknown. One thing for certain is that tea drinking customs were not popular in the Han Dynasty.[1]

During the Three Kingdoms period, there were records of tea in official history. In *The History of the Three Kingdoms*, there was a description about liquor and tea: Sun Hao, the last emperor of the Eastern Wu Kingdom, liked entertaining guests. Every time when a banquet was held, each attending official must drink seven liters of liquor regardless of liquor tolerance, and anyone who could not drink so much would be forced into drink. Sun Hao's favorite official Wei Yao could only tolerate two liters of liquor, so Sun Hao allowed him to reduce his liquor amount or stealthily give him tea in lieu of liquor. Later, when Wei Yao fell out of favor, Sun Hao forced him to drink full seven liters of liquor to humiliate him deliberately.[2]

During the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, the Han people in southern China such as Sichuan had already widely consumed tea, at least in the literati and officialdom classes. Before the death of Emperor Wu of the Southern Qi Kingdom, Xiao Zuo, for the sake of frugality, issued an edict stating, "Do not sacrifice animals in my mourning hall," which should be replaced with ordinary things such as tea, cakes, dried rice and liquor, and he demanded that in the future, "all people regardless of class should follow this custom."[3] This also seems to indicate that tea, like cakes, rice, etc., became a daily dietary item for common people. However, at that time, the way of drinking tea was extensive decoction. Lu Yu, tea sage in the Tang Dynasty detailed this way of tea cooking and drinking before the Tang Dynasty in his book *Tea Classic*, citing records from *Guangya* (广雅). "In Jing and Ba prefectures, leaves are picked to make cakes, and old leaves are made into cakes and rice paste. To cook tea, you should first roast it into red, mash it and then place it in porcelain. Cover it with a soup, and mix it with scallions, ginger and oranges to make cakes." （Lu 2021:68）When cooking tea, first bake a tea cake over a fire until it turns red, put it into a container, smash it, and then cook it with scallions, ginger and orange peel. This tea drinking method is more like eating tea other than drinking tea in modern times, and tea is more often used as a food to appease hunger. There are extensive controversies in the tea academic community regarding the way people drank tea before the Tang Dynasty due to insufficient historical materials.

In the Tang Dynasty, tea drinking became popular and a spiritual enjoyment, and the tea cooking process became more refined. Tea drinking customs in China spread from southern tea producing areas to the north. Before the Tang Dynasty, the place most famous for tea production and drinking in China was Sichuan, and literatures on tea were mostly about Sichuan. During the Qin and Han Dynasties, tea drinking customs in the Guanzhong region, the political center of China, also came from here. Gu Yanwu in the Qing Dynasty said, "Tea drinking began after the Qin State conquered Sichuan." (Gu 2020:405) In the meantime, the spread from temples to secular society was also an important step in the development history of Chinese tea drinking. Imperial censor Feng Yan of Emperor Dezong of the Tang Dynasty explained in detail the spread of tea from south to north, and the relationship between tea and temples. "*The Compendium of Materia Medica* states: 'It quenches thirst and makes people sleepless.' Southern people like to drink it, while northern people don't drink it much at the beginning. During the Kaiyuan period, exorcists at the Lingyan Temple on Mount Tai developed Zen greatly. Those who could not sleep and refrained from food at night were allowed to drink tea. From then on, people carried tea, cooked and drank it everywhere. This practice was followed by more people and became a custom." (Feng 2005:51) Monks loved drinking tea to avoid drowsing when sitting in meditation, and also because they didn't eat after noon, and drinking tea could appease hunger partly. The author of *The Classic of Tea*, Lu Yu, grew up at a temple from childhood, and his knowledge of and love for tea probably came from the monks who brought him up at the temple initially. Tang Dynasty poets always associated tea with monks, Zen and temples. For example, Du Mu's *Inscription for the Zen Temple* writes, "Today, by the side of the silk Zen couch, tea smoke sways gently in falling flowers." (Du 2007:365) Huang Tao's *Inscription for Master Yuanyou's Courtyard at the Donglin*

Temple writes, "I have been busy with official duties for half a life without talking with Zen monks even once. Today, I climb a peak beside a distant spring with them carrying tea ware."[4]

Tang people mainly drank ball tea and cake tea, which had to be crushed and ground before cooking and drinking. Tang tea sage Lu Yu recorded four ways of drinking tea in *The Classic of Tea*: coarse tea, loose tea, powder tea and cake tea. The latter two were processed through such operations as baking, roasting, steaming and stir-frying; He further defined 24 tea making and drinking tools, including stove, basket, tealeaf tray, towel, etc. These tea drinking tools have been found in archeological excavations of tombs. A set of exquisite tea utensils and tea utensils enshrined by Emperor Xizong in Year 15 of the Xiantong period (874 AD) of the Tang Dynasty was unearthed from the underground palace of the Famen Temple in Fufeng, Shaanxi, including tea cups, tea bowls, tea mills, tea sieves, salt tables, etc., which were made from gold, silver glass, and porcelain, representing the highest grade of tea utensils in the Tang Dynasty (Han 1988; Sun 1988).

The Classic of Tea records that there were forty-two tea-producing prefectures (Lu 2021:109-135). During the Tang Dynasty, tea producing areas expanded to many parts of China south of the Qinling Mountains and Huai River, including 16 southern provinces today. The tea drinking custom not only prevailed in upper classes of Tang society, but also entered daily lives of ordinary people. In 2015, the Gongyi Institute of Cultural Relics and Archeology excavated and cleared 24 tombs in the eastern part of Gongyi City. Among them, in Year 6 of the Tang Dynasty's Dahe period (832 AD), Sima Jin and his wife were buried together in a tomb, which included burial objects such as mills, stoves, cups, teapots, tea trays, and sitting figurines. These objects are mostly consistent with those recorded in Lu Yu's *The Classic of Tea*, and are the first complete funerary tea set discovered in China (Liu 2016). They reflect the process of tea grinding, boiling, dividing and drinking tea in the Tang Dynasty comprehensively, and represent people's tea drinking customs at that time vividly. Since the tomb chamber with funerary tea utensils is only 4 square meters, it indicates that the tomb owner is not high in status, and also that tea drinking custom began to become popular among ordinary people in the Tang Dynasty. The Tongguan Kiln, located in the northern suburb of Changsha City, Hunan Province, was a large-scale kiln in southern China from the early Tang Dynasty to the Five Dynasties period. A large number of tea utensils such as cups, bowls, pots, furnaces, and cup holders were unearthed here, and some glazed porcelains had clear inscriptions such as "tea cup", "Zhangjia Teahouse" and "taste good tea" (Zhou 2016:75-76). The large number of tea utensils unearthed from the Changsha kiln fully reflects the prevalence of tea drinking culture and the strong demand for tea utensils among people at that time. On February 18, 2023, the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archeology released archeological results to the public. From April to May 2022, archeologists excavated the Qujiazhuang cemetery in Luzhou District, Changzhi, Shanxi, and cleared five tombs in the Tang Dynasty, and 25 in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. From tomb M20 whose owner was buried in Year 6 of the Xiantong period of the Tang Dynasty (865 AD), an exquisitely made complete tea set, including white porcelain teapots and bowls, iron spoons, iron tea mills and green porcelain residue dippers, was unearthed, being the latest archeological discovery of Tang Dynasty tea utensils (Qiao, Li, and Chai 2022).

The Song Dynasty was a critical period for the development and dissemination of tea drinking customs in China. Drinking tea was a hot vogue in Han Chinese society then, and tea was considered part of daily life from upper classes to ordinary people. Wang Anshi wrote in *Tea Trade Decree*: "Tea is similar to rice and salt in civilian use, and cannot be out of stock for even one day." (Wang 2021:1214) From emperors to literati, there were countless poems and articles describing and recording tea matters in the Song Dynasty, and Su Shi alone wrote nearly 80 poems praising tea. Tea was prepared by boiling in the Tang Dynasty and brewing in the Song Dynasty, which marked a turning point in the tea drinking history of China.

Up till today, a large number of various types of Song Dynasty tea utensils have been unearthed through archeological excavations across China, among which the tomb of the Lyu family in the middle and late Northern Song Dynasty in Lantian (1074-1116) is typical. In 2007, the Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archeology conducted a salvage archeological excavation of the family tombs of Northern Song Dynasty Prime Minister Lyu Dafang and epigrapher Lyu Dalin. A large number of high-quality tea utensils, such as iron tripods, stone cauldrons, celadon covered bowls and stone tea mills made of porcelain, copper, iron, stone, etc., were unearthed from the burial site (Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archeology et al. 2018:1186-

1189). In particular, in a copper residue sieve unearthed from the tomb of Lyu Dagui (M12), several intact tealeaves are attached, which are analyzed to be leftover tealeaves. It is not common finely milled tea in the Song Dynasty, but obviously loose tea, and the method of tea brewing are the same as that of today. From the tea utensils unearthed from the tombs of the Lyu family, it can be seen that there were already various ways of drinking tea in the Guanzhong region in the Song Dynasty, including tea milling, Tang boiling and loose tea brewing. In recent years, archeological and cultural relics authorities in different regions have excavated a large number of various types of tea sets in Song tombs and sites of different levels and specifications, fully proving that tea drinking became part of daily life in Song society.

The Song Dynasty was also a key period for tea to be introduced to northern minority regions. Since then, tea has gradually become an important daily necessity for northern grassland ethnic groups and ethnic groups on the Tibetan Plateau, and played an important tie in strengthening connections among Chinese ethnic groups inside and outside the Great Wall. Since the Ming Dynasty, literatures on tea related topics no longer include cake tea making methods and art before the Song and Yuan Dynasties; instead, people mainly drank loose tea made by kneading, frying and roasting, that is, green tea processed by withering and frying. The drinking method is to put tealeaves into a pot or cup, and directly brew them with boiling water, which is consistent with today's tea drinking method. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, tea mills were no longer found in burial objects in tombs.

THE SPREAD AND INFLUENCE OF TEA AMONG NORTHERN ETHNIC GROUPS

Due to climate and soil condition limitations, acidic soil areas south of the Qinling Mountains and the Huai River are main producing areas of tea. Therefore, northern frontier ethnic groups must obtain tea by trading with inland tea areas, and tea was introduced to northern minority regions relatively late. At least during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, they still relied on dairies - casein as their main drink. According to *Luoyang Jialan Records* written during the Northern Wei Dynasty, the Han people of the Southern Dynasty in Luoyang City enjoyed drinking tea, while the ruling ethnic group Xianbei people preferred buttermilk. During the Northern Wei Dynasty, when the Xianbei Emperor entertained ministers, two drinks were offered – buttermilk and tea. The Xianbei people drank buttermilk, while tea was used to entertain Han defectors from the Southern Dynasty. During the reign of Tuoba Hong, the founder of the Northern Wei Dynasty, Wang Su, an official of the Southern Qi Dynasty, gradually changed his dietary habits from "crucian carp soup and tea" of the South to lamb and buttermilk in order to please the Xianbei nobility. At a palace banquet, Tuoba Hong asked him how buttermilk compared to crucian carp soup. In order to show his obedience and obedience to the Northern Wei regime, Wang Su disdained tea and called it a "subordinate to buttermilk". Afterwards, Northern Wei people demoted tea to "subordinate to buttermilk", and in palaces and aristocratic banquets of the Northern Dynasty, "although tea was offered, it was shameful to drink it." (Yang 2010:111) Despite the differences in tea drinking between the North and South, with the development of the times and the integration of cultures, surrenderers or voluntary defectors of the Southern Dynasty gradually influenced northern culture and customs. In the context of reform of Wei Emperor Xiaowen, although there were differences between the Han and Xianbei peoples, mutual learning and adaptation to different cultures and customs became an inevitable trend.

There are few records in Tang Dynasty historical records about northern ethnic minorities drinking tea or engaging in tea trade with the Central Plains. One of the rare examples is the record in *The New Book of Tang – Lu Yu's Biography*, which states, "Uyghurs drove horses to exchange for tea."[5] There is no relevant historical material that explains the purpose of Uyghurs' tea trade.

It was not until the Song Dynasty that northern ethnic groups began to drink tea generally, and tea-horse trade became an important form of material change between farmers and nomads. Except tea-horse trade between the Song Empire and Tibet in the northwest, the Liao and Jin Empires also exchanged for tea with the Song Empire at frontier trading markets. *Song History—Records of Foods and Commodities* records, before the Chanyuan Alliance Treaty was signed, there were several frontier market along the Song-Liao border, including tea trade. However, at that time, the two empires were constantly at war year after year. After the signing of the Chanyuan Alliance Treaty, the Song and Liao Empires maintained peace

situation for 120 years, and bilateral trade exchanges increased. In the second year after the Battle of Chanyuan, which was Jingde Year 2 (1005), the Northern Song Dynasty set up three fixed frontier markets in Xiong, Ba and Ansu Prefectures, with one set up later. During the reigns of Song Emperors Renzong and Yingzong, Liao complied with the treaty and trade was uninterrupted.[6] The Han people in the Liao Empire accounted for about half of its total population, and the south and west provinces among the five capitals and five provinces of the Liao Empire were all inhabited mainly by the Han people. There were also a considerable number of the Han people living together with Khitans in the other three provinces. Since the Han people in the Liao Empire drank tea, Khitans were also influenced, and the flourishing of tea trade between the Liao and Song Empire was inevitable.

Archeological materials also provide us with extensive physical evidence, and present the picture of tea drinking in the Liao, Jin and Western Xia Empires then. There are many murals reflecting tea drinking in the tombs of Zhang Shiqing's family of the Liao Dynasty in Xiabali Village, Xuanhua District, Hebei Province, in which the tea brewers are dressed in Han and Khitan clothing, and the tea boilers, pots, cups, mills and other utensils, and the tea brewing process (Zheng 1994; Zhou 2000). Tea brewers are mostly dressed in Han clothing, and tea ware is mostly from Song official kilns. This may be since the Han people in the northern Liao and Jin dynasties drank more tea at that time, and the Khitan royal family and nobles of the Liao Dynasty were also imitating the way Song people drank tea. In March 2002, a group of well preserved and clearly distinguishable murals were unearthed from the tomb of Jin Dynasty murals in Year 3 of Emperor Xizong's reign (1143) at the construction site of a Fifth Ring Road overpass in Shijingshan, Beijing. The tea scene images in them vividly and intuitively depict tea drinking customs of the Jin Dynasty. In this mural, there are six persons, three of whom gather around a small table for tea activities: a servant wearing a headscarf uses a teapot to brew tea into a tea bowl with a tea cup, while another servant likewise dressed carries a large tray covered with a veil, which contains small objects similar to tea jars and cups. Remarkably, there is also one with curled hair and a waistband holding a bowl of brewed tea, whose is dressed the same as the one with curled hair in a Liao tomb mural in Xuanhua. This person with hair shaved and only a small strand of hair on both temples is clearly a Jurchen or Khitan. From the epitaph, it can be seen that the tomb owner was Zhao Li, a minor official who had undergone multiple regime changes and lived in Yanjing (now Beijing), along with his wife (Yao 2002). Although Zhao was buried during the Jin Dynasty, he himself lived in the Liao Dynasty, so this picture should depict a living scene of Zhao in Yanjing during the Liao Dynasty. The above two archeological materials both reflect the strong trend of tea drinking in the 16 prefectures in the Yanyun region. The way tea was cooked as seen in Liao Dynasty murals was the same as in the Song Dynasty, and it was not milk tea.

A complete set of exquisite white porcelain and celadon tea sets from Ding and Yue kilns, as well as gilded copper residue dippers, were unearthed from six large and medium-sized Liao tombs, including the tomb of a noble consort of Emperor Yayul Longxu (972-1031) in Wangxiaoligou, Tiegongpaozi Village, Caimushan Xiang, Duolun County, Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia. The mouths and legs of these porcelains from the Song Dynasty were mostly decorated with gold and silver coats, with a strong royal style, reflecting the flourishing tea drinking culture in the Liao court at that time. Remarkably, three pieces of exotic glassware were unearthed from the tomb, which were found to be calcium sodium glassware from Central Asia, West Asia, or Iran and Egypt. The glass cups were drinking vessels (Gai 2020:16-21). It can be seen that the Liao Dynasty had close ties and trade relations with the western Islamic world at that time. The vessels found in the tomb of the noble consort of Liao Emperor Shengzong can also be confirmed in literatures. In Dazhong Xiangfu Year 1 of Song Emperor Zhenzong's reign (1008), Song official Lu Zhen visited Khitan. According to his *Khitan Visit Records* written after his return, when he arrived in You Prefecture, Zhang Su, the younger brother of Emperor Shengzong of Liao and the deputy secretary of Qin King Yayul Longqing, entertained him with a banquet. Although Lu Zhen did not describe the food at the banquet, he was deeply impressed by the tableware, such as "a large eunuch serving dishes, vessels made of glass and buckle ware." (Jia 2020:43) The method of making glassware and gold-plated cups described here is basically consistent with the burial objects in the tomb of the noble consort of Liao Emperor Shengzong. However, only noble and scholarly Khitans in the Liao Dynasty drank tea, and the general public might drink less.

Among the tombs of Khitan nobles of the Liao Dynasty discovered to date, tombs with tea sets have been unearthed from the Baoshan Liao tomb and Liao Yayul Yu's tomb in Alukerqin Banner, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia, and the tomb of Princess Chen of the Liao Dynasty in Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Tongliao City, Inner Mongolia. The tea bowls, tea cup holders, residual dippers, tea spoons, teapots, and other full tea sets buried in the tombs are the same as those used by the Han people of the Song Dynasty, except for gold and silver ornaments with ethnic characteristics at edges, indicating that Khitan nobles at that time followed the way of tea drinking in the Central Plains in China. The Chanyuan Treaty between the Liao and Song Empires in Jingde Year 2 of Song Emperor Zhenzong's reign (1005) was a significant bilateral historical event. However, the treaty stipulated that tea was not included in Song's annual tributes to Liao, which indirectly showed that tea was not a necessity of the Liao Empire. Su Zhe wrote the poem *28 Poems on Visiting Khitan – Crossing the Sanggan River* to describe his experiences as an envoy to the Liao Empire (Su 1990:323). It stated, "Mutton with an offensive sour smell and milk are commonplace here." (Sun and Zhang 1987; Qi, Wang and Cong 1996). It means that Khitans at that time ate beef and mutton, and drank dairies mainly, and Su Zhe, who had always lived in the south, was not used to the smell of beef and mutton. However, tea drinking was more popular in the Khitan royal family and nobility. Zhang Shunmin's *Records of Colored Wall Coverings* states that the most common gift brought by Song Dynasty officials on missions to Liao was "tea balls" (Zhang 2019:297). On a birthday of the Liao emperor, the Northern Song Dynasty offered gifts including tea vessels, milk tea and Yuelu tea (Ye 2014:226). Based on literatures and archeological materials, we can summarize tea drinking customs of the Liao Dynasty as follows: In the 16 prefectures in the Yanyun region, which were mainly governed by Han Chinese officials, tea drinking was part of people's daily lives. Among Khitans of the Liao Dynasty, tea drinking was limited to the aristocratic class, and their tea drinking method followed that of the Tang Dynasty and imitated that of the Song Dynasty. For Khitans, tea drinking was more like a ceremonial activity that showed their social status.

The tea drinking custom was prevalent in the Jin Dynasty, but was also popular among the Han people within the jurisdiction of the Jin Empire mainly. There were two sources of tea in the Jin Dynasty: the first was officially-run market trade. "Tea was traded at trading markets on the Song border except the annual tribute from the Song Empire."[7] The first trading market between the Southern Song Empire and the Jin Empire was established in Shaoxing Year 12 (1142), namely Year 2 of Jin Emperor Xizong's reign. "At the request of the Song people, the Jin Empire set up trading markets on the border."[8] The second was folk smuggling. In Taihe Year 16, the Department of State Affairs submitted a statement reading, "Unlike foods and drinks, tea is not a necessity. It has been popular for several years, especially among farmers, and there are teahouses on all streets."[9] "It has been popular for several years" indicates that the tea drinking custom began to spread among all social classes in the Jin Dynasty, but mainly among the Han farming people. The archeological materials related to tea in the Jin Dynasty unearthed to date are not as many as those in the Liao Dynasty. Murals, tea utensils, etc. have mostly appeared in Han areas ruled by the Jin Dynasty, such as mural M2 of the Yunda Jin tomb in Datong, Shanxi, depicting jugs, cup holders, tea bowls, etc. (Wang 1992); the painting of a maid serving tea and passing meals on the mural of Yu Yin's tomb in the Jin Dynasty in Gaotang County, Shandong (Li 1982); the cup holders on mural M5 of the Jin Tomb in Fenyang, Shanxi (Ma et al. 1991). Tea drinking scenes reflected in tomb murals in the Jin Dynasty are roughly the same as those in the Liao Dynasty. Tea utensils used by the Han people in the northern part of the Jin Empire were much simpler than those in the Song Empire, mainly including three types: jugs, cup holders and tea bowls.

As the rulers of the Jin Empire, the Jurchen officials thought, "Tea originates from the Song Empire, and is not a daily necessity".[10] In order to cut fiscal expenditures and avoid "wasting fiscal resources to aid the enemy", the Jin Empire banned tea trade with the Song Empire several times. For example, in *Jin History – Biographic Sketches of Emperor Zhangzong*, "It is tentative decided to ban tea in the 10th month of Year 6 of Taihe." It was even stipulated that only officials at or above rank 7 were qualified to drink tea, and it was strictly prohibited to trade it or use it as a gift".[11] This indicates that at that time, the Jurchens did not regard tea as a daily necessity. However, although tea drinking was not a common custom among ordinary Jurchens, and tea might be expensive due to tea banning, etc., it would only be drunk on important occasions such as festivals and weddings. In Jianyan Year 3 of Emperor Gaozong's reign during the

Southern Song Dynasty (1129), Hong Hao, the Minister of Rites, visited the Jin Empire as an envoy, was detained in cold mountains for over ten years, and became familiar with the Jurchen customs. His book *The Sketches in the Jin Dynasty* described a tea drinking scene at a wedding banquet of Jurchen nobles in northeast China. "After the banquet, the rich guys began to drink tea;[12] several honored guests were retained to drink tea, and coarse tea was used to cook butter." (Hong 2019:38) This means that coarse tea was cooked with fresh milk or butter, which was probably the earliest record of milk tea in Chinese historical books.

In northwest China, the Song Empire was sometimes at war with the Tangut Qiang people. During peaceful periods, the Song Empire opened trading markets on the border. For example, in Jingde Year 4 of Emperor Zhenzong's reign during the Song Dynasty (1007), a trading market was set up in Bao'an Prefecture (today's Zhidan County, Shaanxi). When a war broke out in Baoyuan Year 1 (1038) when Li Yuanhao established the Xia Empire, the Song Empire closed the trading markets and stopped trading. In Qingli Year 3 (1043), the Western Xia Empire negotiated peace with the Song Empire due to heavy financial burdens. In the following year, the two sides signed the Qingli Treaty, and the Western Xia Empire submitted to the Song Empire as a vassal, and received an annual gift "100,000 rolls of silk and 15,000 kilograms of tea" from the Song Empire".[13] Among them, tea was noteworthy as part of the annual gift, indicating that tea became an urgently needed item in the Western Xia Empire. In addition, tea was also the most favored commodity among Western Xia people at border trading markets, with tea being the most desired item.[14] All these fully prove that tea became an important daily necessity in the Western Xia Empire. Tea imported from the Song Empire to the Western Xia Empire was "Huofan cake tea" produced in Linqiong (today's Qionglai City, Sichuan), "weighing 2 kilograms each, and exported to Western Fan and Western Xia as an important item" Yue 2007:1523). That is to say, Huofan cake tea commonly drunk in Western Xia and Tibet was specially processed and made by the Song Empire, suitable for cooking milk tea and butter tea for nomadic peoples. When the Northern Song Empire was overturned by the Jin Empire in 1127, the Southern Song Empire, which moved southward, no longer bordered the Western Xia Empire, so there could naturally be no direct trade between them. However, it is found in the Xia-Jin trade documents unearthed from Khara-khoto that there was still tea trade between the Western Xia and Jin Empires (Yang 2009). Since no tea was produced within the jurisdiction of the Jin Empire, such tea should have been from trade with the Southern Song Empire, which also indicates that the Western Xia Empire had a strong demand for tea, and Western Xia people had generally begun to drink tea.

During the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongols who ruled the Central Plains lived together with the Han people. For example, in the capital, "Merchants from different places could be seen on all streets" HU 2013:4) In such an environment where different ethnic groups coexisted, there was a trend of fusion between farming and nomadic cultures through mutual learning and interactions. In terms of tea drinking, tea became part of daily life. The Yuan Dynasty proverb that "the seven items needed every morning are firewood, rice, cooking oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and tea" indicates the importance of tea in people's lives. In the capital, there were numerous taverns and teahouses. "Teahouses and taverns shine in the morning, and boats and wagons go in all directions." (Ma 2013) In addition, the Mongols began to mix tea with dairies to make drinks suited to their taste. There were many ways of tea brewing and drinking during the Yuan Dynasty, such as wolfberry tea, jade-ground tea, Jinzi tea, clear tea, stir-fried tea, blue paste tea, Sichuan tea, Xifan tea, vine tea, catechu and butter tea, in which Xifan tea, blue paste tea, stir-fried tea and butter tea were made by mixing or frying butter in tea, which was clearly suitable for northern nomads' tea drinking habits. *The Complete Collection of Domestic Necessities* is a collection of daily life articles in the Yuan Dynasty, and records several methods of making tea with milk or butter as follows:

> Blue paste tea: finely grind 50 grams of high-grade tea. First, dissolve butter in half, pour it into tea powder, and keep stirring. In summer, add iced water and stir gradually. One or two spoons of water are enough. It doesn't matter if water is added frequently. Be sure to mix it well until it is snow-white. Add hot and stir in winter gradually, and add warm water and stir in spring and autumn. Adding some salt is preferred.
> Butter tea: Dissolve butter in a silver stone container, pour in river tea powder and stir well. Add water while stirring to make a thin paste, scatter it in a cup, and let stand. The amounts

> of tea and butter depend on the number of guests, but more butter than tea is preferred. This method is simple and great. Make it with water in all seasons, but on a stove in winter. (Anonymous 1986)

The Principles of Correct Diet written by Mongolian medical expert Husihui during the Yuan Dynasty also records methods for making these types of tea:

> Stir-fried tea: Heat an iron pot to red, and stir-fry butter, milk and tea sprouts.
> Blue paste tea: Stir three spoons of jade-ground tea with dough and butter into a paste, and boil it away.
> Butter tea: Stir two spoons of tea powder with butter, and boil it away.
> Xifan tea: native, bitter and astringent, fried with butter. (Hu 1986:58-59)

These tea drinking methods were not only popular among the Mongols, but also accepted by the Han people at that time, as reflected in Yuan drama. In the second chapter of Li Shouqing's *Monk Yuemin and Liucui*: "Tea waiter, give me a cup of butter tea." (Zhang and Wang 1996:4141) In the second chapter of Ma Zhiyuan's *Lu Dongbin Drunken Three Times at Yueyang Tower*: "(Guo) What tea do you want? (Zheng Mo) I want butter tea." (Li 2018:67) From the above examples, it can be seen that butter tea became an important type of tea during the Yuan Dynasty. As for why the Han people of the Yuan Dynasty accepted butter tea and milk tea, the most reasonable explanation may be the cultural adjustment adopted by them to cater to the Mongolian rulers. In the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongols ruled the Central Plains as a ruling ethnic group for nearly one century, and coexisted with a large number of Han and southern people; they fused with each other in terms of language, customs and habits naturally. However, during the Ming Dynasty, there were no longer records of drinking butter tea among the Han people south of the Great Wall.

In addition to milk tea and butter tea, tea whisking and grinding from the Song Empire was also popular among emperors and upper classes of the Yuan Dynasty. "At the beginning, the Empress Dowager Service Office appointed Trumandir as a palace maid to make and serve tea for Emperor Shundi."[16] In other words, during Emperor Shundi's reign, palace maids were even appointed to make and serve tea for the emperor. The office responsible for imperial meals of the Yuan Dynasty was also established a tea supply office in the Wuyi tea plantation in Fujian,[16] and supplied Beiyuan tea to the royal family as a tribute. Non-Mongol Ma Zuchang, who later became a censor and a deputy minister, wrote in his poem *Bamboo Branch Song: Ode to Tea*, "Sheep soup is too greasy. I prefer southern tea newly supplied in a jade jug." He depicted the scene of drinking tea to relieve greasiness after a banquet in the royal palace of the Yuan Dynasty. The so-called "southern tea" means tribute tea such as Beiyuan tea. In addition, murals in Yuan tombs in Shanxi and Inner Mongolia also show the influence of the Song people's tea drinking method in the north. Feng Daozhen's tomb mural "Boy Serving Tea" (Datong Museum 196) in Shanxi in Zhiyuan Year 2 (1265), the Yuan tomb mural "Tea Serving" in the Yuanbao Mountain, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia, the Yuan tomb mural "Maiden Making Tea" in Kangzhuang Village, Tunliu County, Shanxi, and the "Tea Making" in Dade Year 2 (1298) all show tea brewing details, and also include tea utensils such as tea cups, tea trays, teapots and tea mills (Xu 2012:196-206).

The unity during the Yuan Dynasty promoted exchanges and interactions between agricultural and nomadic cultures. The market in Shangdu (northeast of Shanglan Banner, Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia), the second capital of the Yuan Dynasty, was full of people and unique goods, where different dialects could be heard, and high-quality tea was available (Yuan 2015: 458). It can be seen that tea and dairies were sold together in the market then. Since most of the current historical and archeological materials are about tea drinking customs of upper classes of northern ethnic groups, there is no literature or archeological evidence regarding whether ordinary Mongols in grassland grazing areas during the Ming and Yuan Dynasties had already taken tea as a daily necessity.

After the Ming Empire overturned the Yuan Empire, the Mongol forces retreated to the grasslands north of the Great Wall, but still maintained strong military power, known as the "Northern Yuan" in history. Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, adopted a defensive policy towards the Northern

Yuan Empire (Anonymous 1962**:**564**)**, mainly focusing on defending the border, and took a series of defensive measures, such as building the Great Wall from Shanhai Pass in the east to the Jiayu Pass in the west; strengthening military defense forces at strategic locations along the Great Wall and setting up guard posts; relocating border residents to the hinterland while hiding provisions from the enemy. In Hongwu Year 6 (1373), the Ming army relocated border residents from Shuo, Hong, Wei, Anding, and other prefectures and counties to the hinterland for resettlement (Anonymous 1962**:**1502**)**. The isolation and seclusion policy adopted by the Ming Empire hindered transportation and trade across the Great Wall, almost interrupted official bilateral commercial exchanges, and possibly restricted the Mongols' demand for tea, so that they had no preference for tea throughout the Ming Dynasty. Until the mid to late Ming Dynasty, there was still no literature on the universality of tea drinking among the Mongols north of the Great Wall. During the Wanli period, Altan Khan requested to open tea markets along the Great Wall several times. In Year 4 of the Wanli period, Li Shicheng, the Shaanxi Governor, explained in his report that Altan Khan's purpose for opening tea markets, they simply wanted to use tea as a medium for trafficking to the Tibetan region in the Tibetan Plateau to make profits, and strengthen their political influence there, but not to meet the demand of the Mongolian region (Anonymous 1962**:**1459).

After the Manchus ruled the Central Plains, the Mongols played a crucial role in unifying the country and maintaining the regime as an important supporting force. In order to win over the Mongols in the north, the Qing Empire no longer imposed restrictions on tea imports and allowed them to trade tea freely. In addition, with the enhancement of political, economic, cultural and other exchanges between the Tibetan Plateau and the Mongolian grasslands, as well as the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the Mongolian region, the Tibetan tea drinking custom also had a significant impact on the Mongols, and they began to drink tea widely. In Year 27 of Emperor Kangxi's reign (1688), "The place is full of Mongolian earth houses, and a black man offers fried tea paste. Tea was brewed in China without butter, and was tasty even after sun exposure." (Zhang 2018:128-129). Black tea was even used as a hard currency to exchange for livestock such as cows, horses, sheep and camels (Zhang 2018:50).

THE SPREAD OF TEA IN THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

There is no consensus in the academic community regarding the time when tea was introduced to the Tibetan Plateau. From 2012 to 2014, archeologists got a remarkable discovery in the Gurujiamu ancient tomb in Menshi Xiang, Gar County, Ali Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region. From the tomb, plants with "noble" bird- and animal-grained brocades, and suspected tea over 1,800 years ago were unearthed (Huo 2016). According to the analysis of these suspected tea plants by researcher Lyu Houyuan from the Paleoecology Group of the Geological and Environmental Research Office of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, he observed that they contain tea phytolith, rich tea ammonia, caffeine and other ingredients that are unique to tea, so he believed that these plants are tea. Researcher Lyu believed that since the high and cold Tibetan Plateau is unsuitable for tea growth, and India has a short history of tea planting of over two centuries only, "the tea unearthed from Gurujiamu shows that tea was introduced into Ali Prefecture of Tibet with an altitude of 4,500 meters at least in the Qin and Han Dynasties, and the Wei and Jin Dynasties (Lu, et al, 2016). However, in the 2012 excavation report of the cemetery, it was only described as "tea like plant leaf cakes", no further explanation (Tong 22014). However, even it was a tea-like plant, it is not entirely convincing as there was this isolated case. This discovery has left us with more unsolved mysteries that need to be revealed through further archeological discoveries in the Tibetan Plateau.

According to existing literature, there was a lack of records on tea and tea drinking customs in the Tibetan region before the Song Dynasty. Many scholars believe that tea was first brought into Tibet by Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty, but there is no clear evidence to support this argument in Han Tibetan historical materials (Liu 2022). According to records on the Tibetan diet in Tibetan Records in *Old Book of Tang*, "(The Tibetans) ground flour in a bowl, and added butter for drinking." In other words, during the Tang Dynasty, the Tibetans mainly ate barley, fried noodles and butter.[17] In Year 19 of the Kaiyuan period during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty (731), at the request of Tibet, the two sides traded at Chiling (now the Xiriyue Mountain in Huangyuan County, Qinghai Province),[18] and

set it as the border in Year 22 of the Kaiyuan period (734). In Year 10 of the Yuanhe period during Emperor Xianzong's reign (815), Tang and Tibet further traded in Long Prefecture (today's Longxian County, Shaanxi Province).[19] Tang exchanged silk fabrics and other goods for Tibetan horses, but no tea was traded, indicating that tea was not needed by Tibet then.

Although there are records on tea drinking in Tibet during the Tang Dynasty in *A Collection of Han and Tibetan Histories* (written in Tibetan), this book was written during the Ming Dynasty (Stagtshang Rdzongpa 1986:89-90**)**, and cannot prove that tea drinking had already begun in the Tibetan Plateau during the Tang Dynasty. Instead, it can prove that the tea drinking custom was already popular in the core area of the Tibetan Plateau during the Ming Dynasty. Some scholars often use a historical material about tea in Li Zhao's Supplement to the History of the Tang Dynasty to prove that tea had already emerged in Tibet during the Tang Dynasty. The original text is as follows: "When Duke Chang Lu visited Tibet, he brewed tea in a tent. The Tibetan king asked, 'What is this?' Lu said, 'This is tea, used to relieve anxiety and quench thirst.' The Tibetan king said, 'I also have it here.' He went out and said: 'These are from Shouzhou, Shuzhou, Guzhu, Qimen, Changming and Huhu, respectively." (Li 2021:369) Although it was clearly recorded that the Tibetan king collected tea from various tea producing areas in the hinterland, it is not specified whether tea was used as a drink or a drug, nor can it be proven that tea was already widely consumed in the Tibetan region during the Tang Dynasty. At present, this is the only accurate Tang Dynasty historical record on tea drinking in the Tibet region. Moreover, *Supplement to the History of the Tang Dynasty* is a literary sketch of the Tang Dynasty, and the stories it tells are likely to have been heard of from elsewhere or fabricated by the author.

During the Song Dynasty, the Song Empire was constantly under military threats from regimes established by northern nomadic tribes, such as Liao, Jin and Western Xia. In order to cope with frequent wars, a large number of horses were needed to strengthen military strength. Since it was hard to obtain warhorses from northern nomadic tribes at war (e.g., the Liao Empire established by the Khitans enacted a strict law, which stipulated that "anyone who trafficked horses out of the border would be killed, and his/her family exiled" to restrict the import of horses to the Song Empire[20]), the Song government turned its attention to Tibetan nomadic tribes in the west, which were self-administered and not at war with the Song Empire. Thus, tea-horse trade began between the two sides, which involved exchanging Song tea for Tibetan warhorses. Huang Tingjian, a literati during the Northern Song Dynasty, vividly portrayed tea-horse trade in Longshang during this period in *Ten Elegiac Poems for Uncle*, which states that "Sichuan tea is always seen in border markets, and horses come from distant nomadic tribes." (Huang 2003:417)

The Northern Song Dynasty implemented a policy of tea purchase and trading by government, and the government-run trading markets at the Han-Tibet border in the northwest and southwest were sites of the tea-horse trade. During the Northern Song Dynasty, the main markets for tea-horse trade were Qin, Feng and Xi Prefectures in the northwest, rather than in tea producing areas like Diaomen (today's Quanxian), Li (today's Hanyuan County) and Ya'an (today's Ya'an City) in Sichuan. This is mainly because horses in the northwest were of fine breeds and more suitable for fighting, while those in western Sichuan were short in stature and unsuitable as warhorses.[21] In addition to military considerations, the vast grasslands here were also conducive to the grazing of warhorses. After the southward relocation of the Song government, due to the occupation of Shaanxi, the markets for tea-horse trade moved southward from northwest to tea producing areas such as Diaomen and Li Prefecture on the edge of the Sichuan Basin. A tea-horse office was established in the Ming Mountain for unified management, and it was stipulated that "tea from the Ming Mountain in Ya Prefecture should be used for horse purchase only."[22] The Song government traded tea for horses in the northwest because horses there was of good quality, and more important, the northwest was close to battlefields where the Song Empire fought with the Liao, Jin and Western Xia Empire.

The prosperity of tea-horse trade during the Song Dynasty indicates that at least in the Tibetan region on the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau, there was a high demand for tea, and the tea drinking custom was already popular and had become part of the daily life of the Tibetans. Although there are few literature records and archeological discoveries on tea consumption by Tibetan tribes during this period, and there is a lack of description of the tea drinking custom and method in Tibet, emerging historical documents about tea-horse trade between Song and Tibet reflect the importance of tea-horse trade for both sides.

During the Yuan Dynasty, there were clear records of Tibetans drinking butter tea. The names "Xifan tea" and "Xifan big-leaved tea" emerged.[23] During the mid Yuan Dynasty, Husihui, a Mongol, wrote *Important Principles of Food and Drink*, which described Xifan tea as "natively produced, bitter in taste and fried with butter" (Hu 2017:58). The so-called "native place" refers to Ya Prefecture, the origin of tea within the jurisdiction of the Religious Affairs Office during the Yuan Dynasty, and "fried with butter" means frying tea and butter together, which is roughly the same as today's way of making butter tea. Tibetan historical books written in the Yuan Dynasty provide detailed records of tea drinking in the Tibetan region at that time. A few examples are given below:

1. (The monks went to different places for sermons) "A monk reciting the salvation scripture once would receive over 50 large tea bricks as a reward." (Tshal-pa 2002:57)
2. In the year of the earth mouse, when Tshal-pa heard about the reincarnation of the Dharma king, he immediately sent someone to bring him tea and an invitation letter. (ibid.:90)
3. From September to February of the year of the rat, he (the fourth Karmapa Lama of the Karma Kagyu sect) received gifts from various places, including over 700 horses, over 100 kilograms of gold, 500 tea bricks, silver, tiger and leopard skins, yak and ox skins, yellow cattle skins, silk, etc., for mediating a major dispute in Mdo-khams. (ibid.:95)
4. (Byang-chub Vdre-bkol) granted three portions of horses, tea and gold to Tuo-pa. (Byang-chub 1989:50)
5. One day, a benefactor gave a bag of tea, and the monks respectfully asked the worldly Gonpo, "Respected teacher, when can the tea be distributed?" (ibid.:72)
6. In the late autumn of the year of the Yanghuo ox (1316), Acarya Grags-pa Zhang-po was appointed as Khri-dpon. His chef came to Sakya, and brewed the tea for the meeting and my first lecture timely. (ibid.: 91)

The author of Red Annals was Tshal-pa Kun-dgav-rdo-rje (1309-1364), and the author of The History of the Lang's Family was Byang-chub Rgyal-mtshan (1302-1371), the first ruling king of Phag-gru local regime in Tibet. They all lived in the Tibetan region during the Yuan Dynasty. The recorded events related to tea fully show that tea was introduced into the hinterland of the Tibetan Plateau during the Yuan Dynasty.

During the Ming Dynasty, tea had already been sold throughout the Tibetan Plateau. According to Ming History, "Tea-horse offices were established in Qin, Tao, He and Ya Prefectures, and tea was sold over 2,500 kilometers from Doumen, Li, and Yadi Duogan and Dbus-gtsang."24 At that time, the Tibetans also gained a deeper understanding of tea. The Tibetan historical book A Collection of Han and Tibetan Histories divided tea from Han into 16 different types by origin, shape, color, taste and medicinal value, such as Zanaputa and Wusunanda tea（Stagtshang Rdzongpa 1986:125-127）. The method of making tea was to brew tea in a pot and mix it with cheese (Xie 1962:86).

In the early Qing Dynasty, both Han and Tibetan literatures clearly recorded the popularization of the tea drinking custom in the Tibetan region in the Tibetan Plateau. Stupa Annals written by Desi Sangye Gyatso, a minion of the Fifth Dalai Lama in the late 17th century records the construction process of the stupa of the Fifth Dalai Lama during 1690-1695, which includes tea-related content (Sangye Gyatso 1990:851-854).

1. Female official Qu Renqing donated 1,475 grams of gold, silk, tea and other items.
2. Tripa Grags-pa Bshad-grub the Riwoche Monastery donated properties worth 1 kilogram of silver, mainly tea.
3. In the year of the iron horse, Nepalese coppersmith managers were given tea, congee, sweet mustard and decorative silk cloth. Those who painted murals for the monk dormitories were given two packs of tea, one serving of soup noodles and 1 gram of medicine. In the year of the water cock, bricklayers were given one serving of tea and soup noodles each.

The bkav-blon of the Tibet local government during Emperor Qianlong's reign, Dbangrgyal Dokar, mentioned at least six times in his biography *The Biography of Bkav-Blon*", about giving tea to monks in Lhasa and Shigatse (Dbangrgyal 1986:40-48**)**. In short, during the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, with the spread and popularization of tea drinking customs in the Tibetan Plateau, tea gradually became a daily necessity for the Tibetans.

CONCLUSION

Since ancient times, there have been numerous groups of people or ethnic groups living on the land of China that have been divided into different groups for different reasons. Before the formation of a nation state, many scattered populations in remote areas did not even have a unified name and could not be included in the country's population classification system.

The various groups of people living on the land of China have diverse production patterns and lifestyles. The cultural and lifestyle diversity endows Chinese culture with a colorful appearance. If divided by economic type, agriculture and nomadism are the two most typical representatives on the land of China. The mutual differences and complements between them constitute an inherent connection between the contradiction, opposition, and unity of the two economic types. Pastoral areas cannot do without agricultural areas, and agricultural areas cannot do without pastoral areas. Pastoral and agricultural regions are interdependent, and the two cultures of agriculture and nomadism are connected tightly by their complementary nature. Tea plays a crucial role in exchanges between complementary agriculture and nomadism. Since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, tea has become a rigid demand for northern nomadic peoples who had developed a preference for tea. As tea flew from the hinterland to the north and west, local specialties such as horses, wool, leather, medicinal herbs, musk, and sand gold from the northern grasslands and the Tibetan Plateau were also imported into the hinterland. These economic interactions and connections between agricultural and pastoral areas affected many aspects of people's lives and production, turning the agricultural and pastoral areas within China's territory into an interdependent and complementary natural economic region. The formation of this natural economic region is the economic and objective foundation for China becoming a unified multi-ethnic country (Chen 1983:45).

Northern ethnic groups gradually accepted tea, from buttermilk to milk tea and butter tea. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, tea and buttermilk were symbols of Chinese and northern nomadic culture in the political power established by the northern ethnic minorities who occupied the Central Plains. The coexistence of the two in the northern ruling class reflected the tolerance and acceptance of Chinese culture by the rulers of northern ethnic minorities. During the Tang Dynasty, although tea drinking was already very popular among the Han people, and the processing, production and drinking of tea reached a high level, the northern nomadic peoples and the Tibetan Plateau had not accepted tea. By the Song Dynasty, the Liao Empire established by the Khitans who crossed the Great Wall into the Central Plains, the Jin Empire established by the Jurchens, and the Western Xia regime established by the Tangut Qiang people in the northwest included a large number of Han people. Therefore, these northern ethnic groups who had taken control of the original territory inevitably faced Chinese culture and were influenced to varying degrees. Accepting tea drinking customs was a direct manifestation of their influence by Chinese culture. However, during this period, the tea drinking methods of the Khitans and Jurchens imitated that of the Song people, so it was impossible to popularize them on a large scale. Tea lovers were mostly Han people under their rule. The Yuan Dynasty was a crucial period for the development of tea drinking customs among ethnic minorities. The Yuan Dynasty, established by the Mongols, unified the north and south parts of the Great Wall and incorporated the Tibetan Plateau into its territory. The Mongols and Han people coexisted, inevitably leading to cultural and customs exchanges and integration. The Mongols integrated the tea drinking method of the Han people in the Central Plains into their daily habits, creating butter tea and milk tea suitable for grassland ethnic groups by adding dairies favored by nomadic tribes to tea. During the Yuan Dynasty, butter tea became a tea drink parallel with green tea, became a way of drinking tea for northern ethnic groups such as the Mongols, and was also accepted by the Han people in the north at that time. After the establishment of the Ming Dynasty, the Han people in the hinterland no longer drank butter tea. The Mongols who retreated north of the Great Wall continued to maintain their tea drinking custom and developed various methods and customs of making milk tea. After the Qing Empire unified the north and south parts of the Great Wall again, it had an unprecedentedly vast territory. Political unity was conducive to the formation of a unified market and also removed the obstacles for tea to smoothly enter the northern grassland areas.

Since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, the tea drinking custom has gradually entered the heartland of the Tibetan Plateau, and tea has become a necessity in daily lives of the Tibetans living there. As a result, tea-horse trade became an important form of connecting the Central Plains dynasties with ethnic groups such as Tibet and Qiang. Tea was not produced in Tibet, but the Tibetans could not do without tea. The Tibetans exchanged horses, medicinal herbs, wool, borax, and other items for tea from the hinterland.

Compared with other commodities, Brick Tea sold to border minority areas did not fully follow the market rules for free exchange in order to meet the demand of consumers to the maximum extent. On the contrary, it had always been controlled by national political powers, and the exporting quantity had been adjusted by the central government based on the quality of the relationship between the two sides or submission of the ethnic groups. It can be seen that in addition to its commodity attributes, Brick Tea also has strong political attributes, which often outweigh its economic attributes to some extent. It is precisely because of the dual attributes of Brick Tea that it has also played an important political role in maintaining the relationship between the central government and border ethnic groups. After the Song and Yuan Dynasties, due to the Tibetans' preference for tea, tea was used by the central governments of all following dynasties as an important means of "controlling local people", and "it is traded or not depending on the submission of local people."[25]

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ENDNOTES

1. In 2021, the archeological team of Shandong University published "Analysis of Tea Relics from the Warring States Tomb No.1 of the Xigang Cemetery, Zhuguo Ancient City, Zoucheng, Shandong" (Archeology and Cultural Relics, 2021, 5), disclosing that the unearthed tea sample was a brewed tea residue. They believe that this is the earliest known tea relic in the world, which advances physical evidence of the origin of world tea culture by at least 300 years. But this statement has been questioned by some experts.
2. Records of the Three Kingdoms, Vol. 65, Wu Records – Wei Yao's Biography, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1982, p.1462.
3. Book of Southern Qi, Vol. 3 Emperor Wudi's Records, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1972, p.62.
4. Full Collection of Tang Poems, Vol. 704, Inscription for Master Yuanyou's Courtyard at the Donglin, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1960, p.8098.
5. New Book of Tang, Vol. 196, Biography of Lu Yu, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975, p.5612.
6. Song History, Vol. 186, Records of Foods and Commodities, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985, p.4563.
7. Jin History, Vol. 49, Treatise on Economy Part IV, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975, p.1107.
8. Jin History, Vol. 50, Treatise on Economy Part V, p.1113.
9. Jin History, Vol. 49, Treatise on Economy Part IV, p.1108.
10. Jin History, Vol. 49, Treatise on Economy Part IV, p.1109.
11. "Merchants often exchange silk for tea at huge amounts, which is exchanging for something useless with something useful. If this is not banned, that would be a great waste of money. Officials at or above the 7th rank are ordered should drink tea in their families without selling it or offering it as a gift." (Jin History, Vol. 49, Treatise on Economy Part IV, p.1108.)
12. This was tea produced in Jianning, Fujian (today's Jian'ou, Fujian), being the most famous tea variety during the Song Dynasty, and designated as an item of tribute.

13. Song History, Vol. 11, Emperor Renzong's Records, p.215.
14. An Extension of History as a Mirror, Vol. 149, Month 5 of Year 4 of the Qingli period of Song Emperor Renzong, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2004, p.3614.
15. Yuan History, Vol. 114, Öljei Qutug's Biography, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1976, p.2880.
16. Yuan History, Vol. 87, Records of Officials III, p.2206.
17. Old Book of Tang, Vol. 196, Tibet I. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975, p.5220.
18. History as a Mirror, Vol. 213, Month 9 of Year 19 of the Kaiyuan period during Tang Emperor Xuanzong's reign, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1956, p.6796.
19. History as a Mirror, Vol. 239, Month 11 of Year 10 of the Yuanhe period during Tang Emperor Xianzong's reign, p.7720.
20. An Extension of History as a Mirror, Vol. 82, Month 6 of Year 7 of the Xiangfu period during Song Emperor Zhenzong's reign, p.1880.
21. Song History – Military Section has a detailed explanation about this, "Market horses can be divided into two types: One type is warhorses, which are from western border areas and healthy enough to prepare for formation, including those from Dangchang, Fengtie Gorge and Wenzhou; the second type is Jimi horses, which were from southwest barbarian areas, and are short and nonconforming, including those from five prefectures of Li, Xu, etc." (Song History, Vol. 198, Military Section 12, p.4955.)
22. Song History, Vol. 198, Military Section 12, p.4952.
23. Xifan big-leaved tea was recorded in Yuan History – Treatise on Economy Part II – Tea Method. (Yuan History, Vol. 94, Treatise on Economy Part II, p.2394.)
24. Ming History, Vol. 80, Treatise on Economy Part IV, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974, p.1947.
25. Records of Qing Emperor Kangxi, Vol. 283, Month 1 of Year 58 of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign (1719), Factual Records of Qing, Vol. 6, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985, p.768.

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