

# Tea for Tourists: Cultural Capital, Representation, and Borrowing in the Tea Culture of Mainland China and Taiwan

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Tea is arguably one of the most widely consumed beverages in the world. It has been imbued with diverse medicinal, cultural, and symbolic characteristics. Tea plays a significant role in the construction of contemporary national and regional identities that are, in turn, presented and represented for tourists in the form of tea houses, museums, tea trails, guided tours, and tea tastings. Based on ethnographic participant observation in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Taipei, and Pinglin, this paper tackles a comparative analysis of tea culture as used and represented in cultural tourism, focusing on the identity narratives of specialised tea museums, tea houses, and tea markets to trace cultural representations and flows of contemporary cultural borrowing in the art of tea.

*Keywords:* tea culture, tourism, China, Taiwan, cultural capital  
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## Introduction

One day when Pooh Bear had nothing else to do, he thought he would do something, so he went round to Piglet's house to see what Piglet was doing. It was still snowing as he stumped over the white forest track, and he expected to find Piglet warming his toes in front of his fire, but to his surprise he saw that the door was open, and the more he looked inside the more Piglet wasn't there.

A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner*

When the mind is clear one can sip tea, when the spirit is at ease one can talk of aspiration.

Old Chinese Saying

One winter afternoon, several decades ago, when Twin-ing's tea was considered a privilege, if not a luxury, a friend asked me to tea. There were no teahouses in

Ljubljana at the time, so the partaking of tea took place at home. His was an old apartment with squeaky wood floors and high ceiling, and china teaware that went with the décor. A small group of friends and acquaintances tended to meet in each other's houses for tea and talk during their study years. It was a particular gathering of 'us', the tea drinkers, against 'them', the coffee drinkers, a self-ascribed identity marker with the airs that went with it. On that particular afternoon, waiting for tea to be prepared, I recall picking up a book and opening it at random – the passage of Pooh looking for Piglet jumped out at me and, with laughter, Pooh has stayed with me ever since.

Finding myself in Shanghai in the spring of 2018, I was reminded of Pooh's predicament vividly. Looking forward to tasting a variety of Chinese green tea and expecting to find tea served in teapots, I entered the breakfast room in the hotel on the morning after arrival. More than fifteen cooked dishes were prepared and elegantly laid out, but no green tea. There

were a coffee machine and two low-grade black Lip-ton tea bags sitting in water in a glass pitcher without being removed. The more I looked, the more the green tea was not there. Bewildered, I finally asked the staff, and they shrugged: no green tea. The same occurred among the tea fields in Hangzhou. When asked in a hotel why there was no green tea, the staff answered with a solemn expression: ‘Tourists drink coffee.’ Though tea is arguably one of the most widely consumed beverages in the world, and it would appear improbable not to find it right there from where it originates, in the middle of tea plantations, the reality of a tourist in a hotel in China at present appears to be . . . no green tea.

Tea is an acquired taste. It took decades of tea drinking to slowly learn about the art of tea, from tea bags to loose-leaf tea, from boiling water, to the nuances of temperature, from black to light colours, fragrance and taste, from British mugs to Chinese and Japanese small teacups, from clay to porcelain, from functionality to ritual. Tea is also an idiosyncratic taste (Figure 1). Both acquired and idiosyncratic tastes fit into Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in two of the three proposed forms. The most explicit is the embodied form of cultural capital, the accumulation of which depends on the individual and her investment of time and effort. In that sense, it corresponds to the skill of preparing tea, the *Gong fu chá* – *Gong fu* or *Kung fu*, meaning to make something with an effort, in our case *chá*. Not just pouring boiling water over a teabag but employ the accumulated knowledge in order to have the best result in tea preparation. Effort entails a personal cost of invested time, ‘*On paie de sa personne*’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244) as well as socially constructed ‘*libido sciendi*.’ The outcome is a symbolic value that cannot be directly transmitted like economic capital or, indeed, an objectified form of cultural capital that can be defined only in relation to the embodied cultural capital. The objectified form may be both material and symbolic. In material form, it can be transmitted to the next generation; in our case, for instance, that would mean the teaware; in contrast, the symbolic part may be transmitted only partially as knowledge or appreciation but not as skill, effort, or time.

Tea is a commodity with a complex, even exciting



Figure 1 Objectified Cultural Capital: *Gong fu chá* Tray, Teapot, Teacups, Tea Pitcher, Teaspoon and a Tea Friend from Taipei, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo

history and global impact. It has been imbued with diverse medicinal, cultural, and symbolic characteristics. It has only recently attracted the somewhat narrow attention of tourism scholars.

Based on ethnographic participant observation and informal interviews in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Taipei, and Pinglin, this paper tackles a comparative analysis of tea culture as used and represented in cultural tourism, focusing on narratives of specialised tea museums, tea houses, and tea ceremonies in order to trace cultural representations and flows of contemporary cultural borrowing in the art of tea.

Lacking knowledge of the Chinese language, my research heavily depended on local interpreters. Hopefully, an acquired embodied cultural capital of the art of tea may have helped to mitigate that unfortunate handicap to a certain extent.

Not a believer in the deep analytical value of adjective tourism(s), I am not interested in defining ‘tea tourism’ in this paper but rather tackle tea within tourism contexts. In order to do so, I first introduce a short historical overview of tea, followed by basic descriptions of tea classifications before engaging in topics of tea and tourism.

### Tea History: A Short Overview

Drinking tea over time strengthens thought.  
Hua Tuo, *Dissertation on Foods*

Tea in China is firmly set in the mythological past.



Figure 2 Evolution of Chinese Characters Depicting Tea, China National Tea Museum, Hangzhou

Regardless of the type and style of writing, popular (Wang, 2013), semi-academic (Tong, 2010; Saberi, 2010), academic (Benn, 2015; Han, 2007), all accounts of the history of tea in China tend to start with the Shen Nong (also transliterated as Shennong), a mythical ruler, heroic and cultural figure who was supposed to rule between 2737 and 2697 BCE. He is alleged to have discovered the beneficial effects of tea by chance, when one day the wind blew a leaf into his cup of hot water. Referred to as a *Divine Husbandman*, a father of agriculture and herbal medicine, he is portrayed with a transparent stomach that enabled him to see which ingested plants were beneficial and which not. In the *Pinglin* tea museum in Taiwan, he appears as an animated figure that serves as a prop for tourist guides.

The mythological past may turn out to be more tangible than previously thought. Namely, the Chinese archaeologists are engaged in numerous excavations that may, as they did in the past, reveal material culture once considered mythological, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties being cases in point (Saje, 2015). Shen Nong may thus appear one day out of mythology, but perhaps not quite with a transparent stomach. Tracing the history of tea is complicated by the fact that before the 7th century there was no single unambiguous character to denote tea or indeed tea culture. There were diverse characters that may or may not have explicitly referred to tea but included other beverages as well (Figure 2). The cultivation of tea in China is usually traced to the mountainous southwest of Sichuan and Yunnan, regionally limited and quite unknown in other parts of today's China.

It was not before the Tang dynasty (7th–10th century) that the *chá* character was introduced and has since then been used to describe tea as a plant and a beverage. It was also in the Tang dynasty that the first official book on tea was written around 780, by Lu Yu, entitled *Chá Jing*, usually transliterated as *The Classic*



Figure 3 Statue of Yu Lu at the Tea Market in Shanghai

of Tea. Lu Yu is celebrated as the 'sage of tea' or even the 'god of tea' (Tong, 2010). His statues are found at tea museums and tea markets. He is portrayed in good spirits, holding a cup of tea and a scroll with the teapot and a rock placed at his feet (Figure 3).

His three-volume book on tea consists of the writing on the origin and characteristics of tea, production and tools, preparation, and utensils. It also includes anecdotes, legends, fables, and recipes. Lu Yu effectively mixed historical accounts with literature that flourished in Tang dynasty and established the connection between the art of tea and the arts including calligraphy, which is being revitalised at present in public displays as well as in university curriculums (Figure 4).

The period has also produced an extensive body of tea poetry that may be read as historical and ethnographic data on the production, consumption, material culture and art of tea. One of the most famous poems is the *Seven Bowls of Tea* by Lu Tong who is considered to be the second sage of tea, after Lu Yu. He describes the effect of the seven brews of tea on

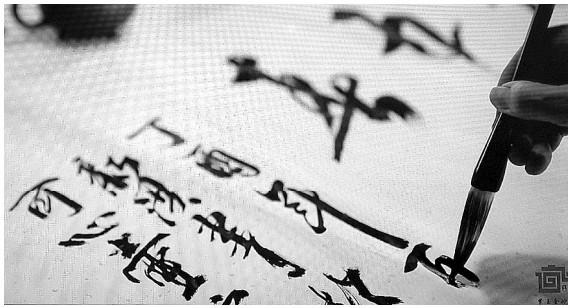


Figure 4 Tea and Calligraphy: Video Presentation at Shanghai Tea Market

his body, thoughts, emotions, and attitudes, following Taoist imagery (Benn, 2015, 14).

In the 9th century, tea was introduced to Korea and from there to Japan, where it initially attracted little attention. However, three centuries later Japan adopted tea. In a time of the Song dynasty (10th–13th century), sophisticated new rules were introduced into the art of tea, and it is from this period that the Japanese *Cha No Yu* ritual was developed and elaborated on.

In the Ming dynasty (14th–17th century), compressed tea was banned, and loose leaf tea was prepared in a bowl (*gaiwan*) or a pot, thus underlying the importance of utensils. The whole new economy of teapot production stems from this period. During the 17th and 18th centuries, tea came to Taiwan with several waves of Han Chinese settlers; yet it was not until the 19th century that tea was produced on a larger scale.

Tea was introduced to Europe in the 17th century by Portuguese and Dutch traders. The styles of production and processing remained a closely guarded secret in China throughout Qing dynasty up to 1850s, when the situation changed dramatically.

In 1848, a Scottish gardener and botanist, Robert Fortune was sent to the interior of China by the East India Company as a plant hunter and a spy with a sole mission of bringing back specimens and seeds of tea plant together with detailed notes on tea production and processing. He was disguised as a mandarin supposedly coming from beyond the Great Wall (Rose, 2010). He negotiated with the Chinese intermediaries from the areas where tea was produced. The outcome of his mission – successful from the point of view of

the British Empire – shifted the relationship between China and Britain and not only reshaped the map of tea production from China to India, which was part of the British Empire at the time but plunged China into a great economic crisis. The Chinese production of tea did not truly recover until a century later.

In the 20th century, there were several ruptures that influenced the tea culture in mainland China. The most devastating was the period of the *Great Leap Forward* in the 1960s, when not only the production of tea plummeted, but material culture in the form of tea houses also disappeared to a great extent. The Cultural Revolution also saw the further erosion of tea culture although production itself picked up at the time (Han, 2007). In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, there was the rapid growth of tea production along with the re-established tea houses, new tea museums, markets, and shops – many of them designed to cater to tourists. Currently, China is once again the largest tea producer in the world due to changes in the global market.

In Taiwan, the period from the early 1970s was marked by the changed international position of the island that was no longer a member of the UN. At that period tea production was re-orientated towards a domestic consumption with a focus on the high-grade tea, teaware design and tea houses. The period marks a start in the complex process of forming a new identity referred to as Taiwanisation, which is an ongoing process marked by a transition from a civic identity towards an ethnic one that includes de-Sinicisation.

#### What's in a Name?

The tea plant, either a tree or a bush, belongs to the *Camellia* family and is classified as *Camellia sinensis* with two varieties that are commercially produced: *Camellia sinensis* from China and *Camellia sinensis assamica* from India.

Names for tea – as plant or beverage – in most languages stem either from the Mandarin Chinese *chá* or *tè* from an Amoy dialect of southern Fujian via the Malay *teh*. The difference in adopted names reflects the historic trade routes and influences. In the early 17th century, The Dutch East India Company was the main importer of tea thus spreading the *thee* to the most of Western Europe with the notable exception of

Portugal where the *cha* was adopted by way of Macao. In the 16th century, before the Dutch transmission, the expression for tea in English was a version of the Mandarin *chaa*, *cha*, *tcha* (see <https://www.etymonline.com/>). The Mandarin version also travelled overland to eastern countries.

- Dutch: *thee*
- English: *tea*
- French: *thé*
- Spanish: *té*
- German: *tee*
- Portuguese: *chá*
- Russian: *chai*
- Slovenian: *čaj*
- Turkish: *çay*
- Persian: *cha*
- Greek: *tsai*
- Arabic: *shay*

In everyday use, the word ‘tea’ does not necessarily refer to *Camellia sinensis* but is more broadly used to include numerous varieties of herb infusions that, strictly speaking, should not be referred to as ‘tea’. This standpoint is considered purist by some authors (Ellis, Coulton, & Mauger, 2015). Be that as it may, in this paper, we consider tea in its pure form or in a fusion form as in contemporary bubble tea or cheese tea prepared by any variety of *Camellia sinensis sinensis* or *sinensis assamica*.

Historically, herb infusions or *tisanes* were considered medicinal beverages and were not equated with tea. It was the invention of the teabag that opened the door to different forms of production, perception, and consumption that eventually led to the name of ‘tea’ being widened to include herb and fruit infusions. Teabags were invented in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century while in Britain Tetley adopted them half a century later only to be met with an initially ‘frosty reception’ (Ellis et al., 2015, p. 264). However, they quickly picked up the pace, and other tea companies were forced to follow suit. Teabags marked a new period of standardisation for mass production in which low grade and low quality equalled high profits. It also marked the changed social structure of tea

drinking. From the communal, sharing of tea in a teapot it increasingly turned into an individual ‘one bag per mug’ occasion. The teabag also meant the predictable taste – always the same – ordinary – a reversal as it were of pure tea for which taste marked its distinction.

### Tea Classifications and Grading

Varieties of tea by colour are the result of different production procedures. Contemporary classification usually includes distinction by fermentation, shape, baking, and season. Fermentation is an expression borrowed from wine production and is, in fact, a misnomer (Needham, 2000). The process that plucked tea leaves undergo is one of oxidation, not fermentation. The only exception is Chinese *Pu Er* tea, which is subjected to natural fermentation by *Aspergillus niger*, a yeast bacterium that thrives in warm, damp, and ventilated environments. Natural fermentation takes up to five years. In most contemporary *Pu Er* production, the process is artificially accelerated from 45 to 90 days (Zhang, 2014).

The shape of tea, such as string, sphere, flat or rolled depends on the processing. Baking is the application of heat to the plucked leaves, which may come from natural sun heat or several varieties of artificial heat. There is no set season for tea plucking; it depends on the region or even the individual tea garden. It may be plucked just once a year for a few days or four or more times a year. It depends, much like wine, on the complex concept of *terroir*,<sup>1</sup> though this plays little or no role in the official grading of tea quality. There is no unified tea grading system. In China, tea is graded by numbers, with one being the highest grade. Grades are determined according to the shape of the leaves. i.e., the same shape, same size leaves are of high grade, at the bottom is dust which goes into teabags. In addition, tea may be graded by the name of the garden or the mountain where it is produced, such as the

<sup>1</sup> Several expressions in Chinese are transliterated as *terroir*. They are usually divided in three groups, one referring to micro-climate, soil, geology, the other to style of production and preparation, the third to history, tradition, folklore and political framework (Chan, 2012).

Lion grade of the *Long Jing* (Dragon Well) green tea from the Lion Peak mountain in Hangzhou (Figure 5). In addition, the so-called historical tribute teas – teas that have been given to emperors as tribute each season and are included in historical books on tea – are considered of high grade, *Long Jing* being one example.

Japanese grading is determined by the season of plucking while grading in Taiwan includes appearance, aroma and flavour, thus making taste to account for the 60% of the grade. In Taiwan, the systematic efforts to produce, maintain and promote high-grade tea – particularly oolong – started (as already mentioned) in the early 1970s and established a network of both large and small producers.

The international prices of Japanese and Taiwanese teas tend to be significantly higher than the Chinese ones, though there are some exceptions, like *Da Hong Pao*, one of the most expensive oolong teas in the world with original trees from the Ming dynasty in the area of the Wuyi Mountain, one of the iconic cultural spots infused with legends, stories and beliefs (Xiao, 2017). In the case of *Da Hong Pao*, the name itself influences the price while the quality that a tourist attempts to establish must be through tea tasting, as there are many varieties with the same name.

### Tea and Tourism

In a seminal work on tea and tourism, Jolliffe (2007 p. 250) proposed a set of objectives for a research agenda including understanding tea cultures and traditions in relation to tourism and cultural change, the study of tea tourism products, demographics of tea tourists, their motivation and experience, studies of natural tea destinations, preservation of tea material culture, and sustainable tea tourism projects of various kinds. After the literature review in English, it appears that such broad objectives are as yet far from being met although there are some indications that tea research is alive and strong in the Chinese language (Benn, 2015) though it is not clear to what extent it includes tourism. In English, research on tea is scattered at best (Xiao, 2017; Writer, 2013; Mezcua Lopez, 2013; Zhang, 2016) and some essential ethnographic work has been done by the same scholar (Zhang, 2014, 2018a, 2018b) and



Figure 5  
Lions Grade  
of Spring 2018  
*Long Jing* Tea

addresses tourism only tangentially. The abovementioned 2007 edited volume perhaps already indicated the shortage of relevant researchers by including four contributions by editor herself in addition to two that she co-authored. Two other authors also contributed or co-authored two articles each. To my knowledge, there was no other edited volume or monograph published exclusively on tea and tourism after that. It appears to remain an under-researched area.

Based on a relatively short ethnographic participant observation in China and Taiwan that was connected to a topical conference and Erasmus teaching, a few observations on contemporary tea culture are offered in the present paper. Conducting research in mainland China and Taiwan without the command of the language is (as already noted) bound to be of limited degree. Either one needs a mediator and interpreter or is reduced to body language and observation. Where possible, I have relied on interpreters, particularly in tea markets.

### Tea Museums

Two tea museums, both constructed in the 1990s, are observed in comparison. The one in mainland China was visited in May 2018, the one in Taiwan in March



Figure 6 China National Tea Museum, Hangzhou

2013. In 1991, the National Tea Museum was opened in Hangzhou, among fields of the revered *Long Jing* green tea. This is the UNESCO world heritage area of West Lake, where culture and particularly poetry is sedimented and mixed with the art of tea practices from different historical periods (Dewar & Li, 2007).

While there is no singular linear history of tea in China, or indeed of China itself, there are different periods, diverse schools and practices, numerous changes and ruptures, the official discourse is increasingly stressing the national narrative of 5000 years of uninterrupted 'everlasting' history. A short, broad and vague, though the decidedly friendly description of tea history that glosses over the hegemonic discourse is offered on the introductory wooden panel in the China national tea museum in Hangzhou, opened in 1991, and reads as follows:

Tea is one of China's major contributions to mankind and world civilisation. China is the origin of the tea tree and the first country to discover and use tea. The tea industry and tea culture started from the drinking of tea. Over thousands of years, as the custom of drinking tea penetrated more and more deeply into Chinese people's lives, tea culture has been steadily enriched and developed as part of the age-old national culture and a gem of traditional oriental culture. Today, as a worldwide beverage, tea serves as a tie of deep affection between the Chinese and people in other parts of the world (Figure 6).

The museum collection is divided into several houses each with its themes and topics. Despite the all-encompassing essentialism at the beginning of the museum's historical explanations (mentioned above),

there is a comprehensive overview of the historical styles, customs and ritual uses of tea among different ethnic groups presented in writing, material culture, installations, and videos. All written explanations are transliterated to English while the staff, polite and friendly, do not communicate in English with a noted exception of a very young boy of ten or so, who was able to explain in fluent English, the background of the teaware on display and for sale in one of the houses. It was however quite easy to do a self-guided tour while three buses of Italian tourist visiting at the same time had their own guide who spoke Italian. Tea tasting was offered to groups of Chinese families and appeared to be much more informal than at tea markets. Another tea tasting for larger groups of guided tourists was offered in a tent at the edge of the museum. Tea was presented in large glasses and brewed several times by simply adding more water from the kettle. The *gong fu chá* way of preparing tea is not suitable for large groups unless there are numerous demonstrators or tea masters present at the same time.

After a short reflection, I decided not to participate in a group tasting, taking advice from the famous Song dynasty calligrapher Cai Xiang, who, in 1051, wrote *A Record of Tea* or *Cha Lu* (Tong, 2010). In the book, he makes the following observation on the number of people partaking in tea: 'The fewer guests when drinking tea, the better. A crowd of guests is noisy, and noise detracts from the elegance of the occasion. Drinking tea alone is serenity, with two guests is superior, with three or four is interesting, with five or six is extensive and with seven or eight is an imposition' (Wang, 2013, p. 62). It is a timely reflection on the well-recorded tension in tourism of how to balance the number of tourists with sources and resources to offer meaningful experience to all involved. Is there a holistic, long-term view of tea tasting?

The Pinglin tea museum in Taiwan was opened in 1997 and is located by the Beishi River, in New Taipei city, an hour's drive out of Taipei, under the mountains were green and oolong tea is produced. At the time of the visit, I was the only visitor, so the staff was very engaged in my well-being though none of them spoke English. While the history is comparably presented to the one in Hangzhou with some nuanced



Figure 7 Food Served with Tea, Teahouse at Pinglin Tea Museum Taiwan

differences, particularly on the importance of quality teaware and proper preparation of tea, the focus of presentation that is also laid out in several buildings is mainly on Taiwanese tea culture and particularly on the local ethnography of tea – with narratives and visual material on several generations of the same family tea producers in Pinglin. At the time, one of the rooms was entirely dedicated to sensory experience – the sound, sight, smell, and taste of tea. In one of the buildings, there was a tearoom with open windows to the river on the one side and the inner garden with water so the sound of water, essential to all Taiwanese teahouses may be heard along with soft traditional music. The *gong fu cha* was prepared for me with the food of the midday (Figure 7). The tea food menu was changed in accordance to the time of day, so one dish cannot be served all day long. The demonstrator who performed *gong fu cha* explained that with high quality tea the locals did not like to pour the first water over the teapot but prefer to be economical and mix the first and the second brew. I agreed that this was a sensible thing to do, so she poured me a mix. Before I left, she packed the remaining tea and offered me the whole box, which I then drank sparingly at home over the course of several months as the smell, colour, and taste would vividly bring back the entire experience.

In her comparative research on mainland China and Taiwan, Zhang (2018a) tackles the complex concept of authenticity and transnational flow and ex-

change of the art of tea. In mainland China, the Taiwanese art of tea is sometimes regarded as the more ‘authentic’ since it was not subjected to the period of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. The supposed ‘authenticity’ of the Taiwanese practices are only recently being perceived as of value with the process of revitalisation of cultural practices in mainland China, that are being in no small way influenced by tourist demands that search for ‘authentic’ experiences.

The process of flow in cultural borrowing, however, is subject to shifting rules, perceptions, and practices, both in traditional *gong fu chá* as well as in contemporary designer teahouses frequented mainly by the young urban population.

#### Tea Markets and Tea Houses

A bowl of tea, seeing the nature of mountain and river, seeing inner peace, and the boundless creative possibility therein.

Wistaria Teahouse, Taipei

The Chinese invented tea 5,000 years ago, but they didn’t do anything aside from pour hot water and drink it. But we can do so many wonderful things with Chinese tea. Nobody would ever think that cheese, mango, and strawberries would go with Chinese jasmine tea – this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Flamingo Bloom teahouse, Hong Kong

In tea markets, one is able to engage with a variety of traders who may also be producers or are part of the family engaged in tea production. Tea tasting at the market is a standard occurrence and vendors are well prepared to offer several types of tea in quick sequence (Figure 8). The main difference in tea tasting in markets and tea houses is that at the market one needs to be persuaded to buy tea while in that tea house one has already bought it; therefore, an atmosphere of pressure and expectation is present in tea market, which renders tea tasting less complex and enjoyable. It is, after all, a process of negotiation (though of course, some might enjoy precisely that).





Figure 8 Tea Tasting at Shanghai Tea Market: Three Types of Tea Prepared in *gaiwan*



Figure 9 Selection of Teaware at Shanghai Tea Market

In contrast, markets offer wide selections of teaware that is only sparingly available if at all in tea houses. Tea is offered in a teaware shop, and although it is not possible to choose the type of tea, the experience is much less hurried than the one of buying tea (Figure 9).

In the FAO's most recent report on the tea production and consumption (2018), tea production is set to increase 2.2% annually with green tea production in-

creasing even more at a rate of 7.5% mainly due to the promotion of its health benefits. In stressing health aspects, tea is in a sense coming back to its beginning, whether mythical or real, when it was perceived as a plant and beverage mainly used for health reasons. The argument of health speaks both to the 'pure' as well as 'fusion' tea drinkers.

Two distinctive trends were noted during the ethnographic research. First the revitalisation and re-invention of the 'traditional' teahouses with the complex borrowing and fusion styles in interior design and particularly in teaware and the new designer tea houses that cater to urban young generations such as the chain brand HEYTEA (Figure 10). HEYTEA was established in 2012 in Guangdong and became a great success after opening its first shop in Shanghai. Young people were prepared to stand in line for five hours or more to obtain a fashionable tea product. HEYTEA serves mainly cheese tea *zhī shì chá* that was re-developed from the Taiwanese, cheese tea which in turn represents a second generation of Taiwanese bubble tea – a milk tea with tapioca pearls, considered a *xiaochī*, part of Taiwanese street food culture with global popularity (Okrožnik, 2018). Great attention is paid to the design of HEYTEA tea houses, less so to tea quality. It appears that matters little whether it is a low grade or medium grade tea, that goes into *zhī shì cháas* the other ingredients, fruit, salty cheese, mask the original taste of pure tea. Fusion beverages are given colourful names such as *Gold Phoenix*, *Red Jade*, or *Green Beauty*, in a way following the tradition of established tea names, like *Dragon Well (Long Jing)* and a *Red Robe (Da Hong Pao)*, although these come infused with mythological narratives (Su & Hong, 2017).

The fusion beverage of HEYTEA is exported to Hong Kong, Singapore, and the USA (Springer, 2017). The flows of cultural borrowing are intertwined but with diverse aims. In mainland China, they support the emerging young urban lifestyle while in Taiwan they appear to mark an identity distinction.

It would be incorrect to assume that there is a clear age divide between traditional and new tea houses. Young people in Taiwan are regular visitors of tea houses, where they can partake in pure or fusion tea; the same goes for all generations enjoying bubble tea



Figure 10 HEYTEA Chain Teahouse, Hangzhou

and cheese tea as part of street food culture. In small tea houses in Tianzifang, the old part of Shanghai, young designers are selling high-grade tea in fashionable packages (Figure 11).

#### Tea Presentations at ITB Berlin

Based on seven years of observation at ITB (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin), arguably the largest tourism trade fair in the world, tea plays no significant role in the tourism promotion of tea-producing countries, although it is served at different stalls, most consistently at the stall of Sri Lanka. When it engages in offering tea, Japan does so with a degree of sophistication that arguably stems from the most complex and complicated tea ritual in the world. Tea is served as part of hospitality in porcelain teacups, observing the respect of the guests by rotating the cup before handing it to the guest. The Taiwan stand makes tea a non-complicated happy occasion with laughter, serving it in small porcelain cups with a logo (Figure 12).

China occupies a much larger space at ITB, yet there appears little space for tea. It was served last year in transparent plastic cups and, while tea of good qual-

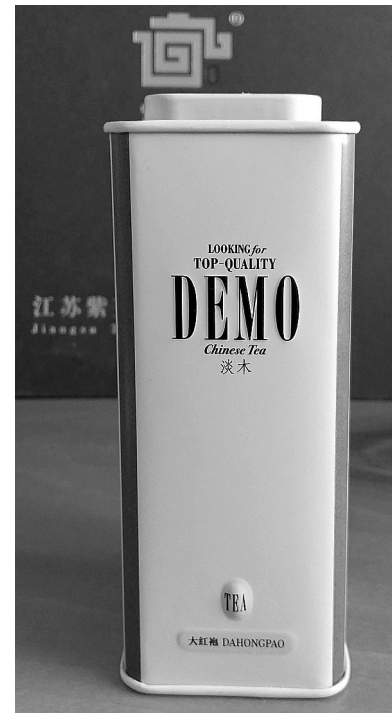


Figure 11  
Da Hong Pao in Contemporary Container

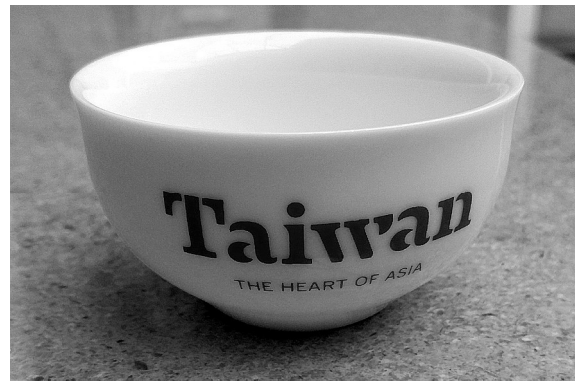


Figure 12 Porcelain Cup Offered to the Author at ITB

ity, it was served with indifference, perhaps in line with the notion that Europeans simply drink coffee.

#### Conclusions

Tea encapsulates the spirit of hills and streams, it rids the heart of misery and melancholy, it revives the soul and calms the mind, but most people are unaware of these merits.

Zhao Ji, *On Tea*

Due to numerous historical ruptures, there is no one single history of tea, nor is there one canonical art of tea. Contemporary cultural borrowing includes Japanese and Taiwanese tea masters teaching the mainland Chinese the art of tea: the art that was introduced in China, forgotten, re-invented, and re-assembled. The current art of tea is an invented tradition with historical Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, British, Indian and other cultural elements. In the context of tourism and tea, there is much to be researched, such as contested processes of national identity and cultural heritage construction mediated by tourism discourse, research of embodied and sensory experience in tourism, tea as an edible chronotope and cultural marker, art and design, language and image, power and responsible tourism. The contemporary local, national, and global trends of young generations that include uses of tradition and heritage in newly shaped urban lifestyles also offer a new and potentially exciting research topic. Tea as a plant, a beverage, a symbol, heritage, experience and process should be further researched from multidisciplinary standpoints in order to expand the theoretical and applied knowledge of cultural tourism *inter alia*.

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