

# The Historical Status of Tea in Ancient Chinese Foreign Relations

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**ABSTRACT.** *The agriculture and handicraft industry were very developed in the late Tang and early Song dynasties, which not only satisfied the various taxes of the country, but also met the living needs of farmers. The surplus products were used for trading, which greatly promoted the rapid development of commerce, including the production of Chinese tea. The spread of tea drinking habits has provided a strong material foundation for overseas trade. At the same time, the corresponding science and technology in the Song Dynasty has been greatly developed, and the mileage of commercial ships made in the Song Dynasty can be more lasting, which provides transportation conditions for overseas trade. At that time, the government actively advocated overseas trade, which further stimulated the development of overseas trade in the Song Dynasty.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Ancient times; Tea diplomacy; Foreign relations*

## 1. Introduction

The Song Dynasty is the richest feudal dynasty in China. The commodity economy has been greatly developed. At the same time, the export trade and overseas trade to neighboring countries have been expanded. At that time, the society was relatively stable and the productivity was greatly improved. The rich agricultural products promoted the rapid development of Commerce in the Song Dynasty, among which the commercial agricultural economy was an important feature of the Song Dynasty. The rapid development and commercialization of agriculture greatly promoted the increase in population and at the same time promoted the rapid development of the Song Dynasty industry, resulting in unprecedented prosperity of the commodity currency economy. Due to the improvement of production technology and population growth, in order to expand income, a large number of cultivated land has been developed, planting area has been expanded, and water conservancy construction has been actively carried out. Agricultural production has a clearer division of labor and specialization, and it has actively introduced new varieties of crops. Through local natural conditions and planting techniques, it has increased crop yields and promoted rapid social development. Due to the rapid development of agriculture and industry, the improvement of handicraft production levels provided a material basis for the overseas trade in the Song Dynasty.

## 2. Spread of Tea Contrast and Tea Sets to Japan

Tea is the characteristic of our country. China's tea culture has a long history. From the ancient "Silk Road", China began to trade through cloth and ceramics. The rapid spread of tea culture in China is closely related to the introduction of Buddhism. In Buddhism, it has a long history to advocate tea drinking and to say that "Taste Zen in tea". Tea has a good effect. It not only can make people clear and calm, eliminate distractions, but also is conducive to refreshing and purifying the effect of thinking. Therefore, monks all love tea. Since the Eastern Jin Dynasty in China, there has been a habit of tea drinking in Buddhism meditation, which became more popular in the Tang and Song dynasties. There are also differences between daily tea drinking and tea reception. The formation of Japanese Buddhism is deeply influenced by China's Buddhism, and the habits of Japanese tea are also introduced from China. Among them, the tea ceremony culture of "harmony, respect, purity and quietness"<sup>[1]</sup> can find corresponding traces in the Buddhist doctrines, so the "tea" culture deeply permeates into the Japanese culture.

Many of Japan's living habits were introduced from China. In the Song Dynasty, many Japanese scholars came to China to study, while many Chinese monks went to Japan to give lectures. With the increase of times, they brought China's relevant living, rest and eating habits to Japan, thus promoting the spread of tea culture. The ancient scholars and literati also loved drinking tea and poetry, which greatly promoted the spread and development of Jian'an tea culture. Many Japanese monks have studied at Guoqing temple in Tiantai of Zhejiang, the Tiantong Temple in Ningbo, and the Jingshan Temple in Yuhang, to learn and master local tea growing, tea making, and tea drinking techniques.

Due to historical reasons, the tea contrast of Jian'an has a great influence on Zhejiang. In Zhejiang, many temples often hold tea parties of different sizes, drink tea, enjoy tea, and also recite chanting together. During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Japan began to send a large number of foreign students to China to learn advanced technology and culture, which promoted the transfer of China's tea culture to Japan. When Japanese monks came to China, they not only learned a lot of Buddhist classics, but also learned Chinese culture and living habits. They brought Chinese tea seeds back to Japan. After a period of development, Chinese tea culture developed rapidly in Japan, and combined with the actual situation of Japan, formed the form and cultural connotation with Japanese characteristics.

### 3. The Influence of Tea Custom in the Tang and Song Dynasties on Japanese Tea Ceremony

China's tea culture has a great influence on the development of Japanese tea culture. In the tea set for drinking tea, Japan is also deeply influenced by Chinese culture. China's tea culture began to appear in the Tang Dynasty, and became popular in the Song Dynasty. The output of tea has also been greatly improved, the habit of drinking tea has been greatly popularized, and the tea-making technology has also been greatly improved. Innovation has greatly promoted the development of tea culture.

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, Japan sent many overseas study monks and messengers to China to study culture. Many overseas study messengers brought our tea culture to Japan after returning home. According to relevant Japanese history books: Master Yongzhong, as a Japanese monk, came to China in the early years of the Tang Dynasty, and lived in China for more than 20 years. He learned a lot of Chinese culture, including tea culture. All was brought back to Japan. Since then, Japan has sent many monks to study culture in the Tang Dynasty. That is to say, during this period, tea trees began to be widely planted in Japan. In Japan's high-level society, the custom of drinking tea has been greatly spread, which promoted the rise of Japanese tea ceremony.

There was another Japanese monk, Master Rongxi. After he came to China, he not only devoted himself to the study of Zen, but also experienced the tea culture of the Song Dynasty. Meanwhile, he introduced "tea feast", "tea contrast" and "tea ordering" into Japan. Through his strong propaganda, the Japanese tea culture has been greatly developed. More and more people come into contact with the tea culture and like drinking tea, so he is honored as "Tea Ancestor" in Japan. The common feature of the Japanese "tea ceremony" and tea contrast in the Song Dynasty is that the latter and its corresponding tea sets were born from the traditional entertainment programs of the Chinese people, which fully shows the wisdom of the Chinese nation. Combining the local actual culture, the two are combined to form a national culture with Japanese characteristics.

In addition to drinking tea and making tea, Japanese tea sets are also deeply influenced by Chinese culture. In Japanese culture, the objects used for drinking tea are called "props", which is also the place most affected by Chinese culture. The "Tenmu Tea Bowl" in Japan was brought back to Japan by Japanese monks from the Chinese Song Dynasty, which was from 1192 to 1333. This monk is called "Tianmu" because he studied culture at Tianmu Temple in China. In addition, the decoration and arrangement of tearooms in Japan, as well as the methods and methods of tea, are closely related to related ancient customs in China.[2]

### 4. The Tea Factor in Overseas Trade in the Song Dynasty

The overseas trade in the Song Dynasty developed vigorously on the basis of the Tang Dynasty. The agriculture and handicraft industry of Song Dynasty were very developed, which provided a strong material foundation for overseas trade. The Song Dynasty government vigorously developed overseas trade. The government of the Song Dynasty promoted those officials who could improve overseas transactions to encourage more people to trade in China. In addition, the Song dynasty used proctors to encourage Chinese people to do business abroad. Through the mentioned related policies above, more and more Arab businessmen came to China to do business, and when they returned, they brought Chinese specialties, including tea and porcelain.

With the frequent exchanges between China and Japan, medicinal materials and tea during the Song Dynasty were mainly used as gifts for Korea. The Chinese economy during the Tang and Song dynasties has made considerable progress. In terms of foreign relations, it not only has close ties with neighboring Japan and Korea, but also can become an interdependence with Arabs as far away as the Middle East. The close relationship is mainly for the prosperity of the country's economy; at the same time, it can promote the friendship between each other. As one of the essential media, tea can be said to be subtle or indispensable. Gradually, it became a part of people's lives. To this day, "tea" and "coffee" have become synonymous with Eastern and Western cultures, and have played a positive role in foreign relations.

### References

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