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# Tea as Commodity in Southwest Yunnan Province:

Pu'er and the Sipsongpanna in Qing China

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## Introduction

Yunnan Province is located at the southwest corner of China, adjacent to the northern area of the Indochinese peninsula. The transportation routes here thus connect China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, the land route being the gateway to China and Southeast Asia. According to historical texts written by the Chinese court, these surrounding countries were required to pay tribute to China. Relations between the Chinese court and the tributaries were ruptured once during the Song period (960–1127), while they were put directly under control as territory of the Chinese court on a limited basis only after the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Chinese historical chronicles acknowledge that these were frontier regions with inconvenient access.

Yunnan's unique topography accounts for this phenomenon. Elevation in Yunnan becomes progressively higher as one proceeds northwest. Meili Xueshan has the highest elevation at 6740 meters above sea level, while elevation drops off in the southeast, the lowest point being 76 meters above sea level in Hekou City. Mountains comprise approximately 84 percent of the terrain, and plateaus, about 10 percent. Only about six percent are small basins called *bazi*, running along the mountain ranges.<sup>1)</sup> This unique geography necessitates that mountains be crossed in order to transport goods from one plain to another. Yunnan, categorized as a subtropical zone, has both a dry and rainy season. It is very difficult to

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1) Yue Dinghan, et.al, *Yunnan-sheng dituce* [Maps of Yunnan Province], (Zhongguo Ditu Chubanshe, July, 2008 revised edition), pp. 6–7.

cross the mountains during the rainy season. In particular, east-west transport is rendered difficult because of the Ailao and Wuliang mountain ranges running north and south, the Mekong River, Nujiang River (or Salween River), and Yuan River (or Red River, Song Cai River), that cut south through the mountain ranges. Rivers are even more difficult to navigate. The precipitous differences in elevations mentioned above cause torrents, while during the rainy season, the water level suddenly rises, rendering the plying of boats virtually impossible. During the Qing period (1644–1911), construction was undertaken on the Jinsha River to facilitate river transport.<sup>2)</sup> Accordingly, transport in Yunnan was principally carried out by muleteers with ponies and mules bred in Yunnan.<sup>3)</sup> The muleteers traveled in caravans called mabang and used specially designed mule packs.<sup>4)</sup>

To solve the problem of transport, routes to and within Yunnan were improved in the Yuan dynasty. The Qing court made a special effort to improve the transport networks of the Ming (1368–1644) stations, and extended the transport routes throughout all of Yunnan.<sup>5)</sup> In the 59<sup>th</sup> year of Kangxi (1720), the Department of the Army began reporting to the emperor to seek construction of a new station in Yixi<sup>6)</sup>. There were often entreaties to the emperor for construc-

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- 2) Morinaga Yasuyo, “Kenryū shonen no Unnan Kinsakō kaisaku kōji ni tsuite: shindai Unnan ni okeru kōdōkaihatsu no ichijirei toshite,” [“Construction on Jinsha River, Yunnan, in the Early Qianlong Years: One Example of Transport Development in Qing Period Yunnan”], *Kyoto Joshi Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku-kenkyūka Kiyō, Shigakuhen*, [Journal of the Graduate School, Kyoto Women’s University, Historical Studies], No. 5, p. 65–119.
  - 3) Masuda Atsushi, Katō Kumiko, Kojima Mabumi, “Cha to shio no kōekishi: jūkyū seiki Ikō no Unnan nanbu kara Tōnan Ajia ni kakete” [History of the Trade in Tea and Salt in the Post-nineteenth Century from Southern Yunnan to Southeast Asia], in Christian Daniels, ed., *Ronshū Monsūn Ajia no seitaishi: chiiki to chikyū o tsunagu, daini-kan chiiki no seitaishi* [Collected Papers on Ecohistory in Monsoon Asia: Linking Local Areas with the Earth. Vol. 2, An Ecohistory of Local Areas], (Kōbundō, 2008), pp. 55–80.
  - 4) For background on the mule caravans, see Wang Mingda and Zhang Xilu, *Mabangwenhua* [Culture of the Mule Caravan], (Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 2008).
  - 5) Huang Bian’s *Tianxia shuilu lucheng* [Land and Water Routes in the Territory] (annotated by Yang Zhengtai, Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe version, 1992), records how the land and water routes were joined inside Ming territory, and describes clearly the roads to Yunnan. Also, the major transportation arteries within Yunnan are described in the Dan Yizi edition of *Tianxia lucheng tuyin* [Route Maps in the Territory] (also by Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe version).
  - 6) In *Qing Shengzu shilu* [The Chronicles of the Shenzu emperor, Qing], Vol. 288, the seventh month of the fifty-ninth year of Kangxi (1720), it states:

tion of new stations. Stations were used from the Yuan period to the Qing period for border defense and administration. The Chinese court used the roads for its messengers, armies, sending of documents, conveying the will of the central government, and simultaneously gaining information on the situation in Yunnan.

On the other hand, merchants could also use the improved transportation routes. A large influx of population into Yunnan occurred after the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>7)</sup> but Han traders were penetrating into Yunnan from the Ming period to engage in commerce. This is how the tea leaf became a commodity in Yunnan. As described above, this region is characterized by treacherous mountain terrain that makes transport and living difficult. It is also an area in which tea plants grow naturally. The most southwestern region of Yunnan, Simao District and the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Region (hereafter referred to as Sipsongpanna), are in particular said to be the native habitat of the tea plant.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to picture from historical documents the actual cultivation, use, and details of tea in Simao and Sipsongpanna before the Daoguang years of the Qing period (before 1821). In this paper, I will discuss the use of *Pu'er* tea cultivated in Simao and Sipsongpanna, focusing on the period between the Ming Dynasty and the Daoguang years (1368–1850). I will be referring to the commercialization of tea by Han people and its influence as seen in the most abundant records available: Chinese historical texts. I will also take a brief look at the use of tea in the region.

## I. The Commercialization of *Pu'er* Tea by Han Chinese

The commercialization of *Pu'er* tea by Han and non-Han people has not been fully investigated. Sichuan, which is designated in all historical texts as the locale where the use of tea originated, is north of Yunnan. During the Han period

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“The Department of the Army agreed to reinvestigate and report to the throne the following: ‘According to documents presented to the throne by Gan Guobi, the Director of Yunnan, an entire area in western Yunnan Province does not yet have Station built. The troops are being dispatched to the borderlands now, and because they were dispatched from Anning Prefecture and are being held up in Tacheng, they have requested the building of an additional 21 Stations. Their request should be duly processed.’ I followed this opinion.”

7) op.cit. Daniels, ed., Nomoto Takashi and Nishikawa Kazutaka, “Kanzoku imin no katsudō to seitai kankyō no kaihen: Unnan kara Tonan Ajia e” [Activities of Han Migrants and Alterations to the Environment: from Yunnan to Southeast Asia], pp. 15–34.

(206 BCE ~ 220 CE), Zhang Qian and others discovered the existence of a road extending from Sichuan to *Shendu* (Sindh, India), indicating that there had already been intercourse between Yunnan and Sichuan.<sup>8)</sup> It can be surmised from the accounts described in the *Huayang Guozhi* (The History of Huayang), and the *Tong Yue* (Contract with a Servant), that tea had been cultivated even as far as Sichuan at least by the Later Han (25–220).<sup>9)</sup> We can also see that various ingredients were boiled together to make tea at this time.<sup>10)</sup> If it is true that Sichuan is somewhat north of the region thought to be the origin of the plant, and that the tea plant was cultivated and derived from Yunnan from before the Han period, we would have to conclude that cultivation methods and use of tea derived from Yunnan. It is also highly possible that the commercialization of *Pu'er* tea had already been started by non-Han peoples, but it is my opinion that there is no direct evidence to support this theory in the historical texts until the Ming period. In the next section I will be examining references to *Pu'er* tea in the period between the beginning of the Ming Dynasty through the middle of the Qing period.

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8) See the *Shiji* [Records of the Grand Historian], Vol. 116, “Xinan yiliezhuan” [Collection of Biographies of the Southwestern Ethnic Groups], and “Dayuan liezhuan” [Collection of Biographies from the Dayuan], etc.

9) Nunome Chōfū, *Chūgoku kissa bunkashi* [Cultural History of Chinese Tea Drinking] (Iwanami Shoten, 1996); Li Bingdong and De Huazhu, ed., *Zhongguo xiaoshuminzu kexue jishushi congshu, nongye jun.*, [Series on the History of Science and Technology of China’s Ethnic groups; Volume on Agriculture], (Guangxi Kexuejishu Chubanshe, 1996).

10) This is believed to have been recorded in the *Guangya*, a Chinese dictionary written in the state of Wei during the Three Kingdoms era (220–280). There are quotes from it in the *Cha Jing* [Classic of Tea], *Taiping yulan* [Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era], and *Shuzhong guangji* [Extensive Records from Shu]. (“According to the *Guangya*, in the area stretching from Jingzhou City to Ba and Shu, tea was picked, rounded into balls, hardened, and coated. To drink the tea, people would roast the leaves until red, and then pound them before putting them into crockery. They would then pour hot water into the crockery, and mix in green onions and ginger. Drinking this tea was said to be a cure for hangovers, and prevented people from becoming sleepy.”) This, however, cannot be verified from the *Guangya* that is contained in the *Siku chuanshu* [Complete Library of the Four Treasures]. Mr. Nunome conjectures that this reference is from the period between the Three Kingdoms and the Jin dynasty (260).

## 1. Pu'er Tea in the Ming Period

Relatively detailed accounts of Pu'er and Sipsongpanna are available from the Ming period. At this time, the area was designated by the name Cheli *Xuanweisi* (Cheli indigenous military chieftainship). Indirect governance was conducted by the *xuanweisi* through the *tusi* ethnic group chieftain system, and with the exception of private trade, commodities from this region were prescribed as tribute or taxes to be sent to the Ming court. As tea was an extremely important commodity for the Ming court in its trade for horses with various western countries, there were severe penalties for the sale of contraband tea.<sup>11)</sup> The huge profits to be derived from the contraband tea, however, meant that officials could not suppress such trade. In the records on tea taxation in the Ming, Yunnan is not listed as a major tea-producing area. Yet if the main tea-producing regions are excluded, the amount of tax revenue on tea obtained from Yunnan is somewhat higher than that for other areas.<sup>12)</sup> The tea of Xuanweisi begins to be mentioned at this time, but tea was not yet sent regularly as tribute to Beijing. Even when a messenger from Xuanweisi was sent to Beijing to pay tribute, the tribute described is comprised of gold and silver vessels, unusual ivory goods, horses, and elephants.<sup>13)</sup>

In terms of the civilian population, Han peoples began migrating to Yunnan

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11) *Mingshi* [History of the Ming], Vol. 80. “Shi huo zhi: si, chafa” [Food and Commodities, 4; Law of Tea]:

“The nomads have a taste for butter, and if they don’t have tea they become sick. This is why they used the method of trading tea and horses to suppress the foreigners of the west after the Song (960–1127) and Tang periods (618–907); the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) was particularly harsh. Tea was categorized into two types: tea for officials and tea for merchants. All of the tea was stored in the borderland regions, to be exchanged for horses. A tax was at times levied on tea for officials, while a tax on merchant tea was reduced in approximately the same way as for salt.... Buying and selling tea without permission resulted in the same punishment as for salt.”

12) *Mingshi*, *ibid.*

“Tea from other than the six tea mountains was offered to the world; the amount of silver tax collected from Yunnan was the highest at over 4000 taels.”

13) It is my observation that tributes from the *Cheli Xuanweishi* (title of king of Sipsongpanna given by China during the Ming and Qing periods) were recorded sixteen times total in the *Mingshilu* [True Record of the Ming], and the *Pu'er fuzhi* [Pu'er Prefecture Gazette], combined. Of these tributes, horses, elephants, gold, silver vessels, and local ivory products are listed nine times. The remaining seven entries are merely listed as local products.

mainly in conjunction with military colonization in Yunnan starting in the Ming period, which brought about a change in Yunnan trade. Settlements in this period were restricted solely to the trade routes linking Yunnan with the cities on the plains, resulting in the necessity of indirect control through the *tusi* chieftain system.<sup>14)</sup> It can be verified that increasing Han civilian control of trade routes and cities set the stage for Han peoples entering Yunnan for reasons other than Ming policies. This was the influx of Han merchants who sought new markets. The most active of these merchants were those from Jiangxi Province (hereinafter referred to as Jiangxi merchants). Unlike the merchant groups from Huizhou and Shanxi, who conducted large-scale business activities, those from Jiangxi were small merchants engaged in distribution of goods at the road termini.<sup>15)</sup> In particular, it was the Jiangxi merchants, deeply in debt, who migrated to Yunnan to make their fortunes in trade.<sup>16)</sup> By the Ming period, they had already moved from Sichuan Province to Yunnan and had begun engaging in commercial activities. In the preface of the Ming geographical journal, *Guangzhi Yi* (from the twenty-fifth year of Wanli; 1597), it states that life in Yunnan would not have been possible without the Jiangxi merchants.<sup>17)</sup> Such a statement indicates just how important the Jiangxi merchants were in developing business throughout Yunnan; indeed, they monopolized all business activities in Yunnan until the beginning of the Qing period.<sup>18)</sup> There was a hall built by merchants from Jiangxi in Mengzi County in southeastern Yunnan. On the stone inscription commemorating the event it states

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14) op.cit. Nomoto, et.al.

15) Yamamoto Susumu, *Minshin jidai no shonin to kokka* [Merchants and Nationhood in the Ming and Qing Periods], (Kenbun Shuppan, 2002).

16) Fang Zhiyuan and Huang Ruiqing, “Ming Qing Jiangyou shangde jingying guannian yu tozi fangxiang” [Mercantile Management Concepts and Investment Direction in Jiangxi merchants during the Ming and Qing Periods], *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* (No. 4, 1991), pp. 68–79.

17) Wang Shixing, *Guangzhiyi*, [Topography of the World], Vol. 4, “Xinan zhusheng” [Various Provinces in the Southwest].

“Yunnan is such a vast area and so sparsely populated that if the Jiangxi merchants didn’t stay there, it would be impossible to make a living.”

18) Fang Zhiyuan, Huang Ruiqing, “Jiangyou shangde shehui goucheng ji jingying fangshi—Ming Qing Jiangxi shangren yanjiu zhi yi,” [Mercantile Social Structure and Management Forms of Jiangxi merchants], *Zhongguo jingjingshi yanjiu* [Research on China’s Economic History], (Vol. 1, 1992), pp. 91–103.

that business began in Mengzi County at the end of the Ming period.<sup>19)</sup> Also, some individuals fled to southwestern Yunnan or Miandian (Burma) because they had committed crimes. Some of these exiled criminals had ties with holders of local power.<sup>20)</sup>

The number of references in historical documents on conditions in Yunnan increased after the arrival of the Han people. “*Pu tea*” is mentioned in Xie Zhaozhe’s *Dianlüe* as having been used widely among the people.<sup>21)</sup> It is my own

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19) Mengzixian wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui [Mengzi County Literary and Historical Documents Committee], “Xiaogong sibe [Inscription about Xiaogong Temple]” *Mengzi wenshi ziliao* [Mengzi County Literary and Historical Documents], (Compilation No. 7, 2003), pp. 267–272.

“The Xiaogong Temple in Mengzi County was built with contributions from some guests to the prefectures of Fuzhou and Ruizhou in Jiangsi at the end of the Ming. The guests, Wu Cheng and Yan Wei etc, had conducted trade in Mengzi County. Inside the temple were five rooms, while the shops were comprised of seven rooms, which were bequeathed to people from the same county. Che Yukai, Yan Shiqing, and Li Liangqing, who were friends of the Wu and Yan, took turns collecting rent on the stores, burnt incense, prayed to the gods, and managed the assets together for several decades.”

20) *Yanshandang bieji* [Biographies be compiled by Yanshandang], Vol. 28, “Shicheng kaowu: jiu” [Examination about fault of History, No. 9].

“Taomeng was a Huayan chief. He married Nanghannong, the daughter of Hanye, who was the indigenous military chieftain. When both Hanye and Siwai died, Hanwa became the next indigenous military chieftain....When Wang Ju, an official from Mubang, went there he demanded money of Nanghannong, but was refused, so he petitioned the emperor to subdue the area. Nanghannong was very frightened. At that time, the Jiangxi merchant, Zhou Baowu, who was in her employ, said, ‘Don’t worry. Officials, Wan Gelao are famous for being greedy. He has a monopoly on power, and is in collusion with Zhao Degong, both of whom are on familiar terms with the emperor. If you send money and ally with him, not only will you not have to worry about being subdued, but you will probably even be able to earn an official post.’ Nanghannong adopted this idea, sent the money, and won herself an official post.”

Similar accounts are recorded in the *Yanjiao jiwen* [The Southern Frontier: A Record of Knowledge about South], Vol. 4, and *Nanyuan manlü*, Vol. 7, [Rambling Records of the South].

21) *Dianlüe* [Brief Account of Yunnan], Vol. 3, “Chanlüe” [Brief Account of Products].

“In ancient times Yunnan had no tea, but it wasn’t the case that tea couldn’t grow there. The aboriginal peoples there had no way to pick tea leaves or process tea. Even if there had been a way to pick the tea and process it, they knew nothing of moderation when boiling the tea, which was the same as having none at all. *Taihua* tea of Kunming first became famous for the color and fragrance of its leaves, which weren’t inferior to *Songluo* tea, and were on average only less finely ground than kneaded tea leaves. The tea cultivated at Guantong Temple in Diancang Mountain was better than *Taihua* tea, and the price was also more expensive. Everyone from officials to the

opinion that this is the earliest direct reference to *Pu'er* tea. From this citation it can be concluded that *Pu'er* tea was already being used by all classes of people, both Han and non-Han, by the Wanli period (1573–1619). The Wanli years were a time when books on tea, which had been prohibited from publication during the Song period, were being reissued. It is possible that references to Yunnan tea reflected this shift.<sup>22)</sup> Although it is difficult to determine when the use of *Pu'er* tea spread throughout Yunnan, it is thought that non-Han merchants such as the Bai people, who became active during the Tang period, or the Hui people, who had entered Yunnan during the Yuan dynasty, were instrumental in its dissemination. The Hui in particular were active over a wide area of Yunnan, even traveling as far as Southeast Asia.<sup>23)</sup> Not only was the station in Yuanjiang Prefecture pivotal for the route connecting Sipsongpanna to the north, but was also on the tribute route from Laozhu (Laos) to the Ming, north through Pu'er and Sipsongpanna, which already served as a major artery to Southeast Asia.<sup>24)</sup> It is most probable that *Pu'er* tea had been distributed widely throughout the areas north of Yunnan through interaction between Han and non-Han merchants who had already been active in Yunnan from the Ming period.

## 2. *Pu'er* Tea in the Qing Period

### i *Pu'er* Areas Put Under Direct Control during Early Qing Period

The name, *Pu'er* tea, became known in areas north of Yunnan through the

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common people used *pu* tea. This tea was steamed, made into rounds, and hardened. When it was boiled, it had the smell of grass, and was only slightly better than drinking water.”

- 22) According to Takahashi Tadahiko, the interim between the Song (960–1127) and the Ming periods (1368–1644) was a transition in the dissemination of hardened forms of tea, powdered green tea, methods for boiling tea for the tea ceremony, and *paocha*. He argues the possibility that standardization of *guanxing* teapots and the establishment of the *paocha* method during the Wanli years (1573–1621) contributed to a sudden increase in texts on tea.
- 23) Yamamoto Kumiko, *Chūgokujin musurimu no matsueitachi: Yunnan kara Myanmar e* [Descendants of Chinese Muslims: From Yunnan to Myanmar], (Shogakkan, 2004).
- 24) See: Daoguang, *Yunnanzhichao* [Yunnan History Copybook], Vol. 6, “Fujianzhi xia” [History of Enfeoffment, Part II], “Nanzhang zaji” [Biographical Narratives from Nanzhang]. The text states, “The route for tribute went overland through Yongchang Prefecture in Yunnan Province to inside the country.” The annotations indicate that it is written in the *Qingshigao* [Draft History of the Qing] that they “entered from Pu'er Prefecture” in the vassal state of Nanzhang. From a geographic perspective, the *Qingshigao* seems more credible.

activities of Han merchants during the Ming period. Jiangxi merchants had already penetrated into Simao from before the reign of Yongzheng (1722–1735). It is probably safe to conclude that Han merchants were purchasing *Pu'er* tea by this time, judging from the erection of a central hall<sup>25)</sup> and the fact that the name, *Pu'er* tea, is among the Yunnan products listed in Kangxi's *Yunnan Tongzhi* (Yunnan Gazette).<sup>26)</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Shunzhi (1661), Wu Sangui strengthened control by the Qing court by presenting the thirteen townships of Pu'er, Simao, Puteng, Chashan, Mengyang, Mengnuan, Mengbang, Mengla, Zhengxie, Mengwan, Shangmengwu, Xiamengwu, and Zhengdong, thereby making them subordinate to Yuanjiang Prefecture.<sup>27)</sup> Wu Sangui himself was independently engaged in the tea and horse trade in Tibet,<sup>28)</sup> indicating there is a strong possibility that he was involved with Han merchants or *Pu'er* tea. In the 44<sup>th</sup> year of

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25) I referred to the appendix of Guangxu, *Pu'er fuzhi* [History of Pu'er Prefecture], "Jiangyu xhuzeng" [Territory (ever-increasing), "Simaokao" [Study of Simao], ("Xinan xi jianfangzhi wenxian,") [Documents on Rare Views of the Southwest], Vol. 31, "Guangxu, Simaotingzhi" [Simao District History].

"Further, according to the introduction to the Wangshou temple renovated by a Jiangxi merchant, Simao already was a vassal state of Cheli. Jiangxi merchants moved to this land before the Yongzheng years in the Qing dynasty (1722–1735) and built the Wangshou temple alongside the Pujue Temple." On December 1, 2003, I confirmed in the documents repository in Simao City (now Simao District, Pu'er City) the inscription to which the description above seems to refer. It had been kept outside, and had been used as a whetstone, thereby suffering severe abrasion, rendering it impossible to read clearly what was written on the face of the stone.

26) Kangxi, *Yunnan tongzhi* [Yunnan Gazette], Vol. 12, "Wuchan" [Local Products].  
"Yuanjiang Prefecture: *Pu'er* tea is produced from Pu'er Mountain; is warm in nature, and has a flavor comparable to others."

27) Daoguang, *Pu'er fuzhi* [Pu'er Prefecture Gazette], Vol. 3, "Lidai jishi" [Historical Annals].  
"Shunzhi 18 (1662) ... Wu Sangui combined Pu'er, Simao, Puteng, Chashan, Mengyang, Mengnuan, Mengbang, Mengla, Zhengxie, Mengwan, Shangmengwu, Xiamengwu, and Zhengdong by making them into thirteen townships subordinate to Yuanjiang Prefecture."

28) *Qingshigao*, Vol. 474, "Liezhuan 261 Wu Sangui" [Draft History of the Qing, Collected Biographies, Wu Sangui].

"At this time (Kangxi 13), Yunnan, Guizhou, and Hunan were all areas under Wu Sangui's control. He conducted business with the surrounding regions by trading tea for horses. He joined forces with the Luoluo [Nosu people] to help fight battles, cut down trees, and make large boats, and was in charge of the marine forces. He mined copper, and minted money; in the document it states 'used.' He saved as much money and grain as possible, confiscated it, and used it as money for the military."

Kangxi (1705), mining was started in Simao,<sup>29)</sup> drawing Han people not just from Jiangxi, but from Guizhou, Lianghu, Sichuan, and Shanxi. It is thought that Han people who were not involved in business began trickling in at this time. At the beginning of the Yongzheng period, Hao Yulin of the Yun-Gui Government General reported to the emperor that Pu'er and Simao were regions that produced an abundance of tea, salt, and minerals; and that Vietnam, Laos, and other Southeast Asian kingdoms were important regions bordering Yunnan. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng (1729), *liuguan* (officials dispatched by the central government to replace local chieftains) began controlling the area by establishing Pu'er Prefecture, Simao Subprefecture, and the Simao tea headquarters, as well as stipulating tea tributes and managing merchants.<sup>30)</sup> Further, about the same time, Yunnan's

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29) Guangxu, *Simaotingzhi* [Simao County Gazette], "Gongchang" [Mining Site].

"At one time, there was a Gangou smeltery in Simao. They produced copper there. The place was also called Mengsa smeltery. It was opened in Kangxi 44 (1705) and closed in Qianlong 14 (1750)."

30) *Shisong Xian huangdi zhupi lunzhi* [Commentary on the Imperial Rescript of Emperor Shisong (Yongzheng)], Vol. 214, part 1, "Zhupi Hao Yulin zouzhe" ["Hao Yulin's Letter to the Throne on the Imperial Rescript"].

"On the twenty-second day of the second month of the sixth year of Yongzheng (1728), Yunnan Governor-General Hao Yulin respectfully reports to the emperor....my underlings have carefully observed the situation in the region, and have found the people to be quite artless, and many of their fields sterile. That is, they freely visit the tea mountains. The greatest part is comprised of tea mountains, the boundaries of which are expansive. They never produce less than over a million *jin* (approximately 605,000 kg) of *pu* tea annually. In this region, salt, rice, and livestock are also produced. The value of these things is very low. My underlings report that they furnish just enough to feed the people."

Ibid.

"Governor-General Hao Yulin respectfully reports to the emperor on the twentieth day of the fourth month of the sixth year of Yongzheng (1728). This is in regard to my having conducted an investigation into the tea mountains and capturing an important criminal. I respectfully request Your Highness to consider the following:...Upon investigating the tea mountain region in Cheli. ...I found that not only was *Pu'er* tea being produced, but so too, were salt wells and copper resources. We must be sure to clarify the national boundaries. If I may make arrangements with all manner of government offices, and position literati, military men, and civil servants in the area to maintain security, we can transform the perverse customs of the people into good ones, and attain peace and calm in the frontier."

*Dianyuan linianzhuan* [Yunnan Chronicles through the Years], Vol 2.

"*Siyou* of the seventh year of Yongzheng (1729). Governor-General E Ertai respectfully reports to

first compressed tea, *dongqinghao*, was created, marking the beginning of tea-leaf processing by Han people.<sup>31)</sup>

During the early Qing, however, rebellions broke out frequently in Pu'er and Simao, both of which were extremely unstable. In the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng (1727), the Hani people rebelled, led by the Miao's *tusi*, Dao Zhengyan. The cause of the revolt was a quarrel with Jiangxi merchants who had come to purchase tea.<sup>32)</sup> This is an interesting incident in that it indicates that Jiangxi mer-

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the emperor on the establishment of the tea headquarters in Simao, and on the impartial settling of cases. The six mountains produce tea. Until now, merchants had come to this place for receiving tea and sending it out. Trade was done in Pu'er by each. Taxes were being collected and sent to another region. That has been going on a very long time.”

31) Mu Xiaohong, Hu Bo, senior eds., *Pu'er cha wenhua zidian* [Pu'er Tea Cultural Dictionary], (Jixie Gongye Chubanshe, 2007).

32) *Shisong Xian huangdi zhupi lunzhi*. [Commentary on the Imperial Rescript of Emperor Shisong], Vol. 125, part 5.

“(Eleventh day of the eleventh month of the fifth year of Yongzheng: 1727) A report to the throne made clear the incident in which forces killed the rebellious Hani bandits. I observed the situation in Cheli and said that the area is close to Laozhuhan, and also borders Mianguo [Burma]. There are Hani people in this area. From all outer appearances, they look like humans, but because they are born unenlightened and perverse, there is no difference between them and animals. With Lancang River serving as their moat and the tea mountains as their base, they conceal themselves deep in the treacherous mountains, living by picking tea and by banditry. Previously, Zhenyuan County sent a plan concerning the rebellion, but it is said that Dao Ruzhen and others are allied with various Luoluo bandits, so there were over four-hundred Hani at that gathering. About the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth day of the fourth month, the villain, Mangzhi, who is head of the Hani people, and twenty-two of his cohorts, including Ma Bupeng and Ke Zhelao, led his friends to commit acts of violence. On about the sixth or seventh day of the fourth month, they blocked the roads in Manke and Manlin, etc., held up travelers, and killed them. Many tea merchants were wounded or killed, or barely managed to flee for their lives ...On the other hand, Dao Zhengyan and others gathered together the government officials and discussed killing and subjugating the rebels. Yet on the other hand, he sent a letter to the throne on behalf of the Hani rebels. According to the letter, Ma Bupeng and the others rampantly killed the merchants because many of them charged high interest when loaning money to the Hani.”

*Shisong Xian huangdi shangyu neige* [Inner Cabinet edict of Emperor Shisong], Vol. 69.

“On the twenty-sixth day (of the fifth month of the sixth year of Yongzheng[1728]), the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, E Ertai, reported that the Miao bandit, Dao Zhengyan, and his cohorts were all captured. Upon receiving the imperial proclamation, the Miao bandit, Dao Zhengyan, provoked the bad people and called upon the Hani, who proceeded to hold up the

chants had already made deep inroads into the lives of the native peoples. With the suppression of this revolt, the court established the Pu'er Prefectural office. Establishment of the Simao tea headquarters, limitations on the tea trade, and concentration of profits in the hands of *liuguan*<sup>33)</sup> resulted in an anti-Qing movement in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng (1732), led by Dao Xingguo from Chashan Qianzong<sup>34)</sup>, who could not abide the exploitation and seizures by the prefect, Tong Shiyin, and the leader of the subjugating army, Li Zongying. It took the Qing court about a year to put down the rebellion.<sup>35)</sup> The Chashan Lahu people,

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merchants and kill the people. E Rtai dispatched his underlings to serve under the local managers. The army drove them deep into Youle and other village outposts, beat down the doors of their dwellings, and captured the ringleaders and their cohorts. This was truly a joyous event.”

33) *Dianyuan linianzhuan*, Vol. 2.

“According to the opinion presented to the emperor by the assistant prefectural magistrate, Zhu Tou, in Simao, they drove out all of the old and new merchants, and fined those who stayed in the area and newcomers to the tea mountain and escorted them out. Tea representatives ordered that all tea be brought to the tea headquarters. People were paid for the tea after they delivered it. People who engaged in buying and selling contraband tea were punished; inspections for this behavior were strict. This, however, was very difficult for the people to bear so merchants depended on paying in advance for the tea and having it delivered.”

34) Tan Yayuan and Yang Zejun, editors-in-chief, *Yunnan Chadian* [Yunnan Tea Dictionary], (Zhongguo Qinggongye Chubanshe, 2007).

35) *Qingshizong shilu*, Vol. 120, sixth month of the tenth year of Yongzheng (1732).

“Time: *Renshen*. What Gao Qizhuo, who serves concurrently as governor-general of Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi, reports to the emperor is that Dao Xinguo, the local company officer of Simao, which is affiliated with Pu'er Prefecture, Yunnan, has led a rebellion in alliance with the Kucong people; he has instigated the aboriginal peoples of Yuanjiang, surrounded the Pu'er Prefectural fortress, and attacked. Further, the aboriginals of Tongguan and Dazhai have also aligned themselves with the Kucong people, crossed the Amo River, and invaded the district of Talang. Ma Hanxun, of the Yuanjiang garrison camp, led local company officer Kang Tianxi and bravely suppressed the bandits. The bandits were defeated, but waves of even more bandits came to attack. Kang Tianxi lost his life in this battle. I immediately dispatched government troops from Yidong and Yixi, commanded Dong Fang, head of the Lin Yuanzhen troops, to practice restraint, and subjugated the bandits from both the Yuanjiang and Jingdong routes until the sun went down.”

Ibid. Vol. 131, fifth month of the eleventh year of Yongzheng (1733).

“Time: *Jiashen*: What the governor-general of Yun-Gui and Guangxi reported was that Dao Xinguo and his cohorts, bandits from Pu'er and Simao, have joined with the aboriginals and illegally fomented rebellion. I immediately sent a summons to Commander Cai Chengui, Dong Fang, and Yang Guohua, the latter two of whom are heads of the Lin Yuanzhen troops, who led the gov-

who worshipped Miandian (Myanmar) priests as gods, joined in the rebellion, and took revenge after the rebellion was suppressed by cutting down the tea plants, and filling in saltwater wells.<sup>36)</sup>

Of the documents included in Qianlong's *Yunnan Tongzhi* (Yunnan Gazette), those presented to the court by Yin Jishan show that the officials who were appointed to this area entered Chashan, illegally picked tea leaves, and sold them without permission. Moreover, the documents express disapproval of these actions.<sup>37)</sup> This indicates that the *liuguan* frequently exploited the local mountain

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ernment troops to launch a devastating attack on all fronts. After we captured the ringleader, Dao Xingguo, and the ethnic group chiefs, Yang Changlu and Li Shifan, who had aligned themselves with him, I had them beheaded, and had the severed heads put on display. When we counted them up, we found we had captured a total of about five hundred of the important criminals and their families. The number of bandits we executed was over 31,600; over 42,600 men and women surrendered, while the bandits who are not yet captured are hiding away in dangerous topography. I have commanded troop commander Dong Fang to hunt them down, kill, and eradicate them.”

36) Kataoka Tatsuki, “Sanchi kara mita chūmen henkyō seijishi: 18-19 seiki Unnan shinanbu ni okeru sanchimin Lahu no jirei kara,” [Political history of Sino-Burmese periphery as viewed from the hills: a case study on the Lahu highlanders of Southwest Yunnan in the 18–19th century] *Ajia/Afurika gengo bunka kenkyū* [Journal of Asian and African Studies], 73, 2007, pp. 73–99.

37) Qianlong, *Yunnan tongzhi* [Yunnan Gazette], Vol. 29, part 6, Zoushu [Document to the Master], Chouzhuo, Pu-Si-Yuan Xinshanho shiyishu [Document on the Taking of New Remedial Measures concerning Simao, Pu'er, Yuanjiang].

“One. We must deal severely with officials who are trading illegally in tea, and with dispatched soldiers who enter the mountains and cause harm to the people. The land in the tea mountains of Simao is infertile, and doesn't produce grain. The aboriginal peoples are suffering from poverty, and can only make a living by producing tea leaves. Nevertheless, the literati and military government officials send soldiers every two or three months into the mountains to pick tea. They stomp on the plants just as they please. They take advantage of their positions to buy up the tea cheaply and sell it all over; they dispatch laborers to carry the tea here and there without permission. Tea leaves are essential for the people here to eke out a living, but they have become the targets of government-dispatched soldiers, who are greedy for profits, causing the native peoples to suffer. E Ertai, who was promoted earlier and appointed me, issued a ban, and has forbidden soldiers from entering the tea mountains. We are strictly enforcing the ban on government officials who engage in the unauthorized selling of tea leaves. But, if we don't deal strictly with this matter, we'll never be able to eradicate this vice. I pray that we can force the government and military officers in Simao to take responsibility and make them keep track of each other. Please allow me to say that if a government official plans to sell tea to make a

people and sold contraband tea. The records show that the Hani and Lahu people were among the mountain people cultivating tea in Simao and Sipsongpanna; that Han merchants came to Sipsongpanna to purchase tea; that the tea plantations were large enough that *liuguan* were able to exploit them; and that the value of *Pu'er* tea was such that tea was sold illegally. At the same time, the commercialization of tea and the process of subsuming the region under Qing court control gave rise to societal stress and social instability.

## ii The Pu'er Prefectural Government under Direct Control through the Daoguang Years

The population suddenly increased during the Qing dynasty from the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. New waves of Han migrants displaced earlier Chinese immigrants who had moved to north and central Yunnan, resulting in the movement of the latter farther southward. Many Han people flowed into Pu'er Prefecture from Yuangjiang Prefecture, even penetrating as far as Simao and Chashan in the surrounding vicinity. As a result, there are more details on *Pu'er* tea in the historical records. As mentioned above, *Pu'er* tea in the narrow sense grew naturally and was cultivated south of Simao in what are called the six tea mountains (Yibang, Manzhuang, Gedeng, Mangzhi, Youle, and Yiwu or Mansa Mountains). Precise information on the tea mountains does not become available until the end of the Qianlong years (1736–1795);<sup>38</sup> there are about two pages devoted to descriptions of tea in the *Pu'er Fuzhi* (Pu'er Prefecture Gazette) in Daoguang (1820–1850). According to the gazette, the tea picked in Simao Subprefecture was

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profit, and soldiers are dispatched to the tea mountain to cause an uproar, report it free of fear of reprisal. If we find out that they are concealing their activities, we will not only severely punish government officials and soldiers who break the law, but for officials who hide in those areas and for soldiers and prefects who are inattentive, we will also follow the example of mutual surveillance of literati and military officials in the regions where the Miao people live. If these officials and soldiers that I am discussing here did not steal the profits from the local people and make their lives miserable, I imagine the people could live in peace.”

38) Daoguang, *Pu'er fuzhi* [Pu'er Prefecture Gazette], Vol. 6, “Shanchuan” [Mountains and Rivers].

“The Six Tea Mountains: Yibang Mountain is 120 *li* southeast from the seat of the county government; Manzhuang is 14 *li* southeast; Gedeng is 260 *li* southeast; Benzhi is 295 *li*; Youle is 350 *li* southeast; Yiwu is 350 *li* southeast.” [NOTE: One *li* in the Qing period is approximately one-third of a mile.]

of particularly high quality even among the tea leaves obtained from the six tea mountains, and as such, was carefully separated. If categorized by flavor, the teas were rated from highest to lowest quality in the following order: *manzhuan*, *yibang*, *yiwu*, *mangzhi*, *mansa*, *youle*, and *bazi* (from Pingchuan). Of course there are many other smaller mountains besides these six where tea is cultivated; of these, tea grown in Mansong is considered to be of particularly high quality. Tea is also ranked according to when it is picked: tea picked in February is called *baimaojian* (bud tea); tea picked in March to April is called *xiaoman* tea; while leaves harvested in June to July are called *guhua*. The picked tea leaves are steamed, and made into squares or rounds, which are called *tongzi-cha* or *datuan-cha*. Small quantities of tea (four *liang* or about 125 grams) are called *wuzituan*. When the tea leaves are separated, yellow leaves called *jinleidie*, and curled leaves called *geda*, are eliminated.<sup>39)</sup> The records describing the quality of tea ranked by area, not to mention tea in general, indicate that *Pu'er* tea was already recognized as an important product in the Daoguang years. It can thus be concluded that this development was a direct result of Han merchants purchasing *Pu'er* tea.

Also from the historical documents it is apparent that the practices of presenting tea tributes to the emperor and the purchase of official tea leaf invoices by the common people were already in place.<sup>40)</sup> There was a tax levied against tea traded by the common people, but because of the great revenue derived, tax on the tea trade soared above 2561.46 taels in the 16<sup>th</sup> year of Daoguang (1836), surpassing 2486.86 taels, including both sales tax and irregular tax.<sup>41)</sup> From these facts we can see that there was a large quantity of tea produced, and that tea was an important source of income in southern Yunnan for the Qing court. Exploitation by the Qing-court dispatched *liuguan* continued throughout the Yongzheng years. The stone inscription called *cha-anbei* in Yiwu, one of the six tea mountains, states that terminal outpost bureaucrats such as *tubian* and *zishi* profited by replacing tribute tea with inferior quality tea, and by levying unfair taxes against

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39) Ibid., Vol. 8, “Wuchan” [Products].

40) Daoguang, *Pu'er fuzhi* [Pu'er Prefecture Gazette], Vol. 8, “Wuchan” [Products].  
 “Besides using the tea for tribute, merchants transport the tea far away.”

41) Ibid., Vol. 7. See process.

the non-Han peoples in the tea mountains.<sup>42)</sup>

It was the non-Han peoples of Sipsongpanna who had always dealt directly in the cultivation of tea. Christian Daniels contends that *Pu'er* tea cultivation in Sipsongpanna during the Yongzheng years was mainly conducted by mountain peoples in compliance with the plains Tai peoples. When Han merchants obtained tea, they would pay in advance for a fixed amount of the tea cultivated by non-Han peoples, and then procure the tea once it was harvested. Han people actually purchased land and cultivated tea themselves only after the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911.<sup>43)</sup> From reports on the uprisings mentioned above, these mountain peoples were comprised of Miao, Lahu, and other ethnic groups. There seems to have been some differences in who was responsible for tea production, depending on the region. The *cha-anbei* stone inscription mentioned above also records that people from Shiping County were ordered to resettle in Yiwu, one of the six tea mountains, where they started tea plantations during the 54<sup>th</sup> year of Qianlong (1789).<sup>44)</sup>

According to reports in Yiwu, Han people had moved to the area from Shiping County five generations earlier. Tea cultivation had been carried out by the Yao people prior to that. The Yao had to yield their plantations to the Miao people by government order; the Miao are still said to be growing tea on the land

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42) Tang Li (Christian Daniels), ed. “*Cha-anbei*”[Official Tea Inscription], *Zhongguo Yunnansheng xiaoshuminzu shengtai guanlian beiwenji* [Collection of Documents Related to the Habitats of Ethnic Groups in Yunnan Province, China], 2008.

“The local manager of Yiwu, Wu Rongzeng, and the scribes, Wang Congwu and Chen Jishao, have been involved in intrigue for these past few years. They have been engaged in conspiracy to do evil acts and unjust allotments, instigating Shiping County citizens, Zhang Yingzhao and Lu Wencai, to lodge one complaint after another....The local manager and scribes received an order from the Simao district and have been paying silver cash for tea tribute. They designated second-grade tea as first-grade tea, thereby lining their pockets with a difference of 300 taels this year. We will prohibit all such behavior in the future.”

43) Ibid. See Daniels.

44) op.cit., “*Cha-anbei*.”

“Zhang Yingzhao, Lu Wencai, and their peers have their family registries in Shiping County. In the fifty-fourth year of Qianlong (1790), the previous indigenous military chieftain invited the fathers and uncles of Lu Wencai and his peers to start up a tea plantation. They were granted a authorization seal and requested to collect the tea tribute on behalf of the local manager.”

granted to them by the government.<sup>45)</sup> Even the Daoguang *Pu'er fuzhi* (Pu'er Prefecture Gazette) notes that most tea was produced by the black-turbaned Hani people, and that at the end of the Qianlong years, the Qing court managed tea plantations and producers, as well as being actively involved in the transport of tea tributes. There are few actual statistics in the historical records to indicate just how large the Han population in the region was at the time, especially because the establishment of Pu'er Prefecture itself occurred after commencement of the Qing dynasty. We can, however, tentatively derive the following statistics: non-Han residents during the Daoguang years, 1016 households; and *keji* (Han settlers from other provinces), 3105 households. Even during the Guangxu years (1875–1908), when rebellions and uprisings were frequent, there was an overwhelming number of Han people (2561 households) compared to non-Han (1561 households).<sup>46)</sup> We can definitely conclude that the influx of Han people began when the area was put under direct court control in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng (1729), and that after the mid-Qianlong years (from about 1770–1796), there was a reversal in the numbers of Han versus non-Han peoples.

Tea continued to be produced in Sipsongpanna after this time but by the end of the Qing period, tea was also being planted in other areas. Tea began being planted in Shunning in the 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> years of Guangxu (1899–1900). By the end of the Guangxu period, tea cultivated in this region had become well-known throughout all of Yunnan.<sup>47)</sup> Other teas from Shunning included Fengshan, Jing-

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45) The reports collected at this time were made on occasion of the excursion by the Sōgō Chikyū Kankyōgaku Kenkyūsho [Research Institute for Humanity and Nature] to Yunnan in 2005. Interviews were carried out by Adachi Shinpei (graduate student, Kyoto University) and Miyawaki Chie (graduate student, The Graduate University for Advanced Studies).

46) Guangxu, *Simao tingzhi* [Simao County Gazette], *Xinan xijianfangzhi wenxuan* [Documents on Rare Views of the Southwest], Vol. 31, “Hukou” [Households].

“There are 1016 aboriginal households, of which there are a total of 2891 able-bodied men, both commoners and gentlemen....There are 3156 immigrant households, of which there are a total of 9327 able-bodied men, both commoners and gentlemen. Compilations made on households suffering casualties from battles so far indicate that 1,230 aboriginal households have been affected, which include 2752 able-bodied men, both commoners and gentlemen, and 2695 women, both commoners and gentlewomen. There have been 2561 immigrant households affected, of which 6363 were able-bodied men, both commoners and gentlemen, and 5647 were women, both commoners and gentlewomen.” (Postscript, Guangxu 11 [1886].

47) op.cit. *Xu: Yunnan tongzhi changbian, xia ce* [Sequel: Yunnan Gazette, Long Edition, last volume],

dong, and Jinggu tea.<sup>48)</sup> Tea planting moved progressively northeastward, until by the 38<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic of China (1949), besides Sipsongpanna, tea was cultivated in twenty-one areas,<sup>49)</sup> a development that, in conjunction with rubber plantations, is considered to have exacerbated monoculture in Yunnan.<sup>50)</sup> Further, tea had originally been transported from Pu'er and Simao. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic (1918), however, the process of compressing tea was started in Fohai area of the six tea mountains, and when craftsmen were invited from Simao, the heart of tea processing shifted to Fohai, which even drew merchants from Tibet.<sup>51)</sup>

## II. Use of Tea in Yunnan

Although the tea plant is said to have originated in Sipsongpanna, it is not known if tea leaves were actually used there or not. Some records seem to indicate that the modern use and processing of tea for drinking was most likely developed in China. Of course, one reason for this conclusion is that there are few direct records of tea-processing technologies from Sipsongpanna, rendering judgment on the direction of technology transfer or mutual influence difficult.

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3, “Cha zhi chanxiao” [Tea Commodity Market], part 1, “Diancha zhi mingcheng, zhuangzhi ji chandi” [Names of Yunnan Tea, Packaging System and Place of Production].

“Transplanting of tea started in Guangxu 25–26 (1900–1901); Fongshan tea from Shunning could be seen cultivated here and there from the end of the Guangxu period (1908); it is now famous throughout the province.”

48) Ibid.

“Yunnan tea is labeled depending on production locale. Accordingly, tea produced in Shunning is called Fongshan tea; tea cultivated in Jingdong, Jinggu, and other provinces is called Jinggu tea.”

49) The following were listed up in the document in the previous citation (in the order listed in the historical document).

“Kunming, Luoping, Xuanliang, Lancang, Fohai, Shunning, Zhenyue, Wufu, Shuangjiang, Zhenkang, Jiangcheng, Yunxian, Daguan, Xinping, Guangnan, Simao, Baoshan, Jinggu, Zhenjiang, Jingdong, Yuanjiang, and Tengchong.”

50) For a study on the creation of monoculture as a result of rubber plantations, see: Fukao Yōko’s “Gomu ga kaeta bonchi sekai: Unnan/ Sipsongpanna no kanzoku imin to sono shūhen” [Socioecological Transformation Triggered by National Rubber Plantations in Yunnan, China: The Impact of Han-Chinese Immigration into Xishuangbanna since the 1950s], *Tōnan Ajia Kenkyū* [The Southeast Asian Studies], Vol. 42, No. 3, 2004, pp. 294–327.

51) Yao Hesheng, *Shui baiyi fengtuji (Minzuminjian wensue yingyin ziliao, 45)*, [Record of Local Customs of the Water Bai People (Photolithographic edition of reference materials on Ethnological Literature)], Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1990, pp. 144–146.

Today, as far as I know, the earliest mention of tea for drinking in general is in the Tang era (618–907) text, *Manshu* (Book of the Barbarians), as has been pointed out by Nunome Chōfū. The *Manshu* states, “The Mengshe barbarians (one of the Bai people) boil the leaves with various spices, ginger, and *Osmanthus fragrans*.” The type of processing technology that was used during the Tang dynasty was apparently not yet in existence, but it does seem that the practice of boiling tea leaves for drinking was already extant. This custom was probably brought from Yunnan to Sichuan along with tea plants. Yet Lu Yu’s *Cha Jing* (The Classic of Tea) denies that this was the case. He contends that this method of drinking tea existed in the Tang dynasty, and indicates that development of tea leaf-processing technology vis-à-vis the positions of China and Yunnan were reversed.<sup>52)</sup> In the Tang era, during times of amity with Nanzhao, a variety of documents were imported into Nanzhao from Tang China, and disciples were sent to Sichuan to receive an education. When relations deteriorated between the Tang and Nanzhao, however, the latter would invade Sichuan Province and return with their dispatched tea specialists.<sup>53)</sup> This is probably how Chinese tea-production technologies and drinking methods were brought into Yunnan. The *paocha* infusion method was established as a way of tea drinking in the Ming era. By this juncture, Han people had already penetrated into Yunnan in a number of capacities, probably facilitating the smooth introduction of tea drinking into Yunnan.

Tea leaves have not only been processed for drinking, but for eating as well. Examples include the practice of the Jino people eating *liangban* tea by soaking the tea leaves to remove bitterness; one group of the Tai people fermented tea

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52) *Cha Jing* [Classic of Tea], Vol. 6, “Cha zhi yin” [Drinking Tea].

“The types of tea are coarse tea, coarsely powdered tea, finely powdered tea, and tea discs. First, the tea leaves are pounded, then boiled down, dried, husked, and lastly, put into unglazed vessels, into which boiling water is poured for soaking. This is called *an* tea. Or, leeks, ginger, jujube, orange peel, dogwood, and peppermint, etc. are put in with the tea leaves and boiled down. Some people are proud of pouring in the hot water quite smoothly, while others are said to send the froth flying because of the way they boil the water. This custom, however, is no different from throwing the water out into a ditch. Even then, the custom has not disappeared.”

53) See: *Xintangshu* [New Book of Tang], Vol. 222, “Nanman liezhuan shang” [Collected Biographies of Southern Ethnic Groups, Vol. 1], “Nanzhao, shang” [Nanzhao, Vol. 1], and “Nanman liezhuan zhong, Nanzhao xia” [Collected Biographies of Southern Ethnic Groups, Vol. 2; Nanzhao, last volume].

leaves to eat them as pickles (*suancha*).<sup>54</sup> The practice of fermenting tea leaves for consumption is also found in northeastern Myanmar (*Lahpet-so*), in northern Thailand and northwest Laos (*Miang*). The consumption of pickled tea leaves thus extends over a wide area, from Yunnan throughout Southeast Asia. Leaves used for tea-eating are comprised of raw, dried, and pickled leaves, the former being used during the harvest season, while dried and pickled leaves are processed for preservation when the leaves cannot be harvested.

Nanba Atsuko and her colleagues extrapolate from their fieldwork that methods for preserving tea leaves are the same as for vegetables, and that tea leaves were originally consumed as a foodstuff. Further, tea for drinking seems to have been developed after the introduction of preservation technologies, such as drying and fermentation. Nanba disagrees with the statement that tea was first used medicinally; she bases her conclusion on the notion that stimulant and other medicinal effects of tea were most probably discovered during the process of eating the leaves.<sup>55</sup> Considered in conjunction with the former conjecture, it can be surmised that awareness of the stimulant and medicinal effects of the tea of which the Han people were cognizant also arrived from Yunnan through Sichuan. Eventually, recognition that tea could be cultivated in the south was linked to the existence of Shennong (also known as the Yan Emperor), who ruled the Changjiang (Yangtze River) region, causing his reputation to spread as the progenitor of tea. I believe the question of whether the use of tea leaves for consumption was a prerequisite for the development of tea for drinking is problematic, as Mr. Nunome also indicates.

## Conclusion

Here I will summarize the history of *Pu'er* tea as found in Chinese historical documents. By the Former Han period (206 BCE ~ 9 CE), the tea plant native to Yunnan had already spread as far as Sichuan. Non-Han merchants are thought to

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54) Nanba Atsuko, Chengshao, and Miyagawa Kinjirō, “Chūgoku Unnanshō no taberu cha: *Liangpancha* [*Liangpan* Tea (a Salad Tea) in Yunnan, China], *Nihon kasei gakkaiishi* [Japan Society of Home Economics], Vol. 49, No. 2, 1998, pp. 187–191. See also: Nanba Atsuko, Miyakawa Kinjirō, Ōmori Tadashi, Katō Miyuki, Tanaka Asako, Saito Hiromi, “Chūgoku Unnanshō Seinanbu no muen tsukemonocha: *sancha*” [Non-Salted Pickled Tea (Sour Tea) in South-East Yunnan, China], *Nihon kasei gakkaiishi*, [Japan Society of Home Economics], Vol. 49, No. 8, 1998, pp. 907–915.

55) op. cit., Nanba, Chengshao, Miyakawa.

have been involved in the dissemination of tea in Sichuan and the northern reaches of Yunnan, and it is evident that *Pu'er* tea was being used during the Later Han (25–220). Tea cultivated in the Simao and Sipsongpanna regions of southern Yunnan, however, was isolated geographically and politically, and was thus not directly purchased or used by Han people. Han people did not become aware of this tea until after the beginning of the Ming period (1368–1644). *Pu'er* tea spread throughout Yunnan in the Ming period through the commercial activities of non-Han merchants, and was consumed by all classes of people, both Han and non-Han alike. With the wholesale military colonization and advance of Han merchants into Yunnan at the beginning of the Ming, *Pu'er* tea came to the fore as a trade commodity. The *paocha* infusion method was established about the middle of the Ming. The reemergence of books written about tea and the appearance of the name, *pucha*, in the historical records, occur almost simultaneously, suggesting a correlation. The high quality of the tea eventually effected dissemination of knowledge of it to the area north of Yunnan.

In the Qing period (1644–1911), *Pu'er* tea was transported all the way to the area north of Yunnan, and began to receive a uniformly high level of appraisal. In conjunction with the establishment of the Pu'er Prefecture in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Yongzheng (1729), direct control of the region during the Qing dynasty strengthened the court's influence, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of instances in the historical documents concerning areas of production, cultivation methods, and participation in tea cultivation by non-Han mountain people. Control over the area by the Qing court was strengthened, facilitating the influx of Han merchants and others, and thus dramatically accelerating development of Pu'er and Sipsongpanna. The influx of Han merchants and Qing officials, however, placed great stress on the communities in the region. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Yongzheng (1729), when the area was under direct control of the Qing court, strife between ethnic groups and Han merchants, as well as unlawful taxation on the part of Qing officials, resulted in a series of large-scale uprisings. The Qing court increased profits through a tea tribute and purchase of official tea leaf invoices, as well as establishment of the Simao tea headquarters, while attempting to suppress the free sale of tea. The considerable profits to be obtained from the sale of contraband tea guaranteed bootlegging by officials and citizens alike, while illegal taxation and imposition of corvee labor by Qing bureaucrats were rampant.

It can be surmised from the Chinese historical records that the use of *Pu'er* tea as a commodity by Han people first became possible when the Han people became cognizant of the Pu'er region and learned that tea leaves were being transported from there. Awareness that *pucha* was being transported from Pu'er began in the Ming dynasty. The impetus for that awareness was the commencement of trading by non-Han merchants from the vicinity of the Kingdom of Dali during the Tang era, the inflow into Yunnan of Han peoples in a myriad of capacities, as well as by the emergence of the *paocha* infusion method. After the beginning of the Qing dynasty, coalescence of these three elements led to the flourishing of *Pu'er* tea. Commercial activities in southwest Yunnan also brought the active intervention of the Qing court, however, resulting in pressure on the ethnic group chiefs and non-Han mountain peoples. This elicited a series of large-scale movements by disconcerted ethnic group chiefs and mountain peoples against the Qing court. In the latter half of the Qing, expansion of tea plantations created a tea monoculture, which placed a great strain on both the social and natural environments. Thus, commercialization of *Pu'er* tea could be considered a social issue insofar as it was related to a major shift in the nature of relations between the Chinese court and local society.

These conclusions are offered with the caveat that they are drawn solely from Chinese historical sources. From the latter half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century until its absorption into the People's Republic of China, the Tai Kingdom of Sipsongpanna maintained an autonomous system. It was the king of Sipsongpanna whom the Chinese court appointed as ethnic group chieftain (*tusi*).<sup>56)</sup> As Christian Daniels attests, after the region was put directly under the Qing-controlled Pu'er Prefectural office during the years of Yongzheng, the influx of court-dispatched *liuguan* and Han merchants contributed to the estrangement of mountain peoples, deterioration of security in the mountain regions, and greatly impacted the process of collapse of the Tai people's chieftains.<sup>57)</sup> Kataoka Tatsuki focuses on the move-

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56) Katō Kumiko, *Bonchi sekai no kokkaron: Unnan, Shipusonpanna no Taizokushi, Kyoto Daigaku Tonan Ajia Kenkyū Sentā Chiiki Kenkyū sōsho* [A History of Sipsongpanna : A Tai State in Yunnan Consisting of Basin Politics; Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto Area Studies on Asia(in Japanese)], 11 (Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai [Kyoto University Press], 2000).

57) op.cit., Daniels.

ment to nationalize economic resources (national monopolization of saltwater wells, etc.) in conjunction with *gaitu guiliu* (displacement of local chieftains by officials appointed by the central court). Such economic encroachment by the Qing court prompted local rebellions. One such example is the Shan people. With the intervention of the Qing court in the Shan government and the influx of Han people, neighboring countries were destabilized, leading to a decline in Shan government control. This gave rise to an independence movement on the part of the mountain Lahu people, who joined forces with Chinese “traitors,” thus bringing a new cycle of Qing intervention.<sup>58)</sup> It is also known that until the mid-1900s, there was still a strong sense of belonging to the defunct Tai Kingdom of Sipsongpanna by the Tai people who lived in this region.<sup>59)</sup> It is uncertain just how compelling and extensive Qing control was over the Kingdom of Sipsongpanna, located in a basin, and the indigenous peoples who lived in the mountains throughout the area. To obtain an accurate historical picture, it is essential to conduct research on the region from a non-Chinese perspective. Even the sudden increase in references in documents written during the reign of Daoguang (1821–1850) are all from the Chinese perspective, and are thus insufficient for providing a complete portrayal of the relationship between Sipsongpanna and Han Chinese.

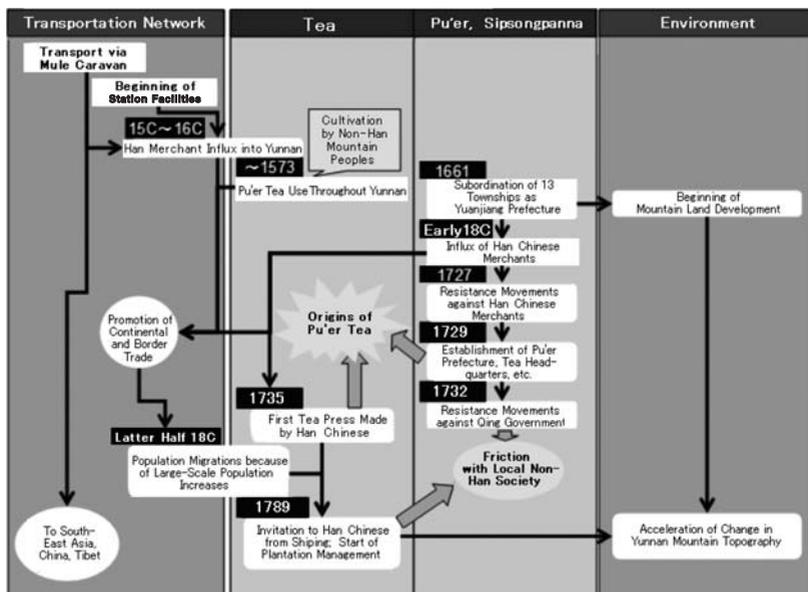
According to reports from Sipsongpanna in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, commodities traded before 1950 were mainly tea and salt in most regions; tea was sold not just within China, but in the vicinity of Myanmar as well.<sup>60)</sup> The history of the transport and actual trading of *Pu'er* tea toward Southeast Asia has yet to be fleshed out. The task remaining for historians is to consider these issues from a multidisciplinary perspective, clarifying the broader pattern of the flow of goods in the Chinese and Southeast Asian kingdoms, and reconstructing the active relationship between them in such a way as to transcend the traditional viewpoint that focuses on the Chinese government and its surrounding areas.

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58) *op.cit.*, Kataoka.

59) *op.cit.*, Daniels, Shimizu Ikurō and Nishimoto Futoshi, “Shūhen shakai ni okeru ijū kūkan no rekishi hendō” [Historical Changes in Living Spaces in Borderland Societies], pp. 203–227.

60) See Note 3.



Flowchart of Development of Pu'er Tea Tread