

## 2021 Symposium Overview

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Work group: Tea Making

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### Abstract:

Tea, Culture, and health. These three things are what have brought three different schools to unite as one collective to learn, and teach each other about the way we interact, within the limits of our countries, and with how we as humans live within the context of our world. The first part of my paper will include my teams overview of tea, including the types of tea, the place of origin. I will then transition to my personal research on Puer tea and what I found out about the making, preparation, and consumption of this tea. The second part will be my overview of what it was like working with my compatriots overseas and within my college. The third part will focus on the challenges and obstacles, as well as the perseverance and bonding we all shared. I will then move on to suggestions to make zoom symposiums a little smoother.

This Symposium was focused on three main categories. Tea, Culture, and Health. These three concepts are at the core of what unites these three great countries. The category I found myself most curious about was that of tea. Firstly, since there are a vast number of different types of tea, I wanted to learn how we as people divided them up into their respective categories. Next, I wanted to know who predominantly drank which kind of tea, and finally, I wanted to know how those different teas were prepared and made into the delicious beverage that is enjoyed across the world.

There is an old Chinese saying which was provided by one of the Students from China, although this person was not cited, as it was presented through Professor Hirsh over Canvas, the saying goes: “Good tea also needs good water.” This saying holds true, from personal experience. The water can make or break a tea. The first question the group asked was “how many types of teas are there?” and Meimei, one of the members of our group did the preliminary research to that question, which the group used as a sort of springboard for the rest of our research. So, the answer is that there are six main types of tea: Green tea, Yellow tea, White tea, Black tea, Oolong tea, and Puer tea. However, there are 20,000 varieties within these main 6. In India, they have their main type of tea, which is called Chai. Chai tea can be made by boiling either water, or milk. Along with this tea comes social norms. One of the students from India told the group about how when one has company over, and they are close, one should make their chai with milk, However, if the company that enter the house is not as close, one should make the chai with water. This was a very interesting concept, and I was curious as to why this was, but was only able to speculate, as this social norm was very old.

My research narrowed down the focus to just Puer tea. I have a personal fascination with this type because when I was about 16 years old, I wandered into a tea shop in Seattle, which sold what looked like an endless variety of teas. I had a tasting and was drawn to it ever since. According to Wikipedia (2021) Puer comes from the Yunnan Province of China. and is one of the only teas known to be fermented. Because of this fermentation, it can be aged for up to 20 years, and can be preserved for hundreds without molding. The fermentation process was not standardized until 1970.

Puer is my favorite tea because when I drink it, I feel as if I have been cleansed on the inside, and my energy feels balanced. This feeling was validated when I came across an article

which explained that Puer tea, in Chinese herbalism, is supposed to open the meridians of the spleen and stomach. (Goodwin 2019). This opening of the meridians is why I like to enjoy this tea right before we as a class do Taiji. I feel like it helps me with my stretches, and I feel extra energized.

The work group I was in was tea making, which to start off with had roughly 17 people in it. The first challenge our group faced, besides a global pandemic, was the difference in time zones. In the United States, where I am from, we are in the Pacific Standard Time Zone. In India, they were in the Indian Standard Time Zone, and in China, they are in China standard Time Zone. Our meeting time was scheduled for 7:00 P.M. PST, which in India is 7:30 A.M. the next day, and in China is 10:00 A.M. the next day. So, there were some communication problems with that aspect, which were to be expected during the first few weeks.

For our group, we decided early on that the best way to convey our ideas were through a collaborative video. About halfway through our time together, one of the U.S. Students proposed that we create a survey for the entire symposium. We wanted to ask the students and professors about their relationship with tea and compile the answers to compare the individual's experiences with the drink. We posted those answers to Canvas after coming up with 13 questions, some were multiple choice, and some were fill in the blank, all pertaining to how the students interacted with tea in their daily life.

There are a couple tips on how to make cross cultural collaboration and communication run a little smoother. I would first establish the time zone change. That seemed to be a particular obstacle which we encountered multiple times. One big one was just consolidation of communication, which is far easier said than done. If we all could get on one central communication app, it would be ideal. I am hoping that in the future, we will all be able to communicate without having to worry about any sort of interference. I would also say that Zoom was an instrumental part of this whole symposium coming together. But that if there was a way to get a texting app for everyone, it would be easier. On the topic of Zoom, I would say recording is key. For the people who cannot make it because different time zones, and different obligations, it helps everyone stay on the same page, and send out a message on whatever app is being used on the topic of the meeting. Another suggestion would be to have two Teachers assistants per group. This way, if one of them cannot attend a meeting, the other one can. I also would say that

if the group meets once a week, have the TA's meet twice a week to plan out what the meeting will be and create a more constructive meeting. I would also recommend starting the planning portion of the symposium off with an outline for each group, earlier.

My experience working with students from India and China was like nothing I have ever done before. This was one of the coolest things I have ever done. Just the fact that I got to know these people who I would probably never have gotten to meet without this, was the most fun I have ever had. They were all so nice, and fun to talk to about what it was like living in their part of the world and telling them what it was like living over here. This was a truly enriching experience, and I would not have traded it for anything. I feel so honored and blessed to have been a part of something greater than myself.



In this picture, I have painted a teacup which says unity, and in the tea pot I wrote Knowledge. I think this sums up my experience with this whole symposium because it outlines how all of our collaboration brought us together to create an amazing, and universal experience.

Work Cited:

Goodwin, L. (2019, December 4). *Pu-erh: Why You Need to Try This Rare Tea*. The Spruce Eats.

Wikipedia contributors. (2021, May 9). Pu'er tea. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*.