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Student Name: QIXUAN ZHOU 周琦璇	
Module Code: SICH6010 Module title: Traditional Chinese Moral and Ethical Education III	Student number: 1804447
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Tasting Tea in Zen

Respected Venerable Shengmiao and my teacher, good afternoon. My name is Qixuan Zhou and I would like to share with you the topic ‘tasting tea in zen’. Let us first take a look at the origin of tea and zen.

Tea is a name of a tree native to the Bashu region of southern China. Our country is the earliest in the world that discovered and utilize tea trees. In the early Tang Dynasty, the atmosphere of drinking tea still remained popular in the southeast, southwest and other places. FengYan said, “south people likes, north people do not drink much”.¹(南人好饮之,北人初不多)Later, The atmosphere of drinking tea began to spread in the north. On the one hand, some southerners went to be officials in the north and would naturally make a living by drinking tea.²

The atmosphere brings to the north, and another important way of transmission is the indirect stimulation and influence of the life of monastic monks. As early as the Northern and Southern Dynasties, it was very common for southern monasteries to grow tea and drink tea, along with the prosperity of Buddhism, especially the formation of Zen and the spread in the north promoted the development of tea drinking in the north.

In the Buddhist Zen courtyard, tea is not only to quench thirst, wash up trouble, wake brain or has other medicinal value. Temple serves tea to Buddha, tea to treat guests, tea has become the tool of Zen monks to enlighten themselves. As well as the material carrier of Buddhist Zen thought, "Baizhang monastic regulations" on the etiquette of ordering tea, serving tea soup, so that the temple is formed a fixed set of tea custom. Zhaozhou Zen teacher makes tea famous in the circle of Zen, and makes it an Important opportunities for Zen monk to get enlightened. The tea ceremony and Zen Taoism finally merged here, and the Zen-tea culture was formed.³

Tea and Zen are two different cultures with their own independent development context. Tea culture is originated from China, and the history of Zen culture was introduced to China from India, and spread to this day. Zen’s rational interest and the taste of tea have mutual sustenance, and mutual support.⁴ Tea and Zen, one is a metaphysical, the other is a metaphysical religion, one is ordinary daily used, the other is philosophy thinking. The two cultures are different, but they gradually contact and tend to merge in the long historical development, becoming a traditional cultural treasure.⁵

Now we are going to see how the two different cultures combine with each other. Firstly, The earliest records of monks drinking tea can go back to the Jin Dynasty. Shan Daokai, Dunhuang resident, sit indoors, without afraid of cold and heat, sleepless day and night, chanting more than 400,000 words.⁶ Eat food and medicine every day, while drinking only tea Sue(茶苏). Some people believe that "tea sue" is made of tea and zi su. Drinking it can refresh spirit. But he sits day

¹ Feng Yan 封演, *fengshi wenjianji jiaozhu* 封氏聞見記校注 [Fengshi Collection and Annotation], (Beijing, Zhonghua Book Company), p51.

² Alan Marvell, [Managing visitor attractions: New directions], *Tourism Research* (2004), p313

³ Joliffe L, [Tea and tourism: tourists, traditions and Transformations], *Channel View Publications*(2007),p45.

⁴ Pan Linrong 潘林榮, *chachan yiwei kaobian* 茶禪一味考辨 [Textual Research on Tasting Zen in Tea], *nongye kaogu* 《農業考古》2(1994), p80.

⁵ Lee Joliffe, Mohamed S.M.Aslam, [Tea heritage tourism: Evidence from Sri Lanka], *Journal Of Heritage Tourism*(2009),p4.

⁶ Zheng Qiao 鄭樵, *tongzhi* 通志 [General Annuals], (Shanghai, Shanghai Classics Publishing House), p613.

and night, in addition to health care, tea can refresh mind. The effect of tea in sitting Zen has begun to be recognized. In the Tang Dynasty, Zen was spread in China on a large range of time. With the prosperity of Zen, drinking tea also became Zen lessons.

Secondly, The tea went into the Buddha Gate-The monks grow tea. When tea drinking is gradually popular in temples, the temple's planting tea, tea making is also popular. Many temples are mostly built in southern China. Surrounded by mountains, the hillside has green valley, lush forest, shrouded in mist, abundant rainfall, and the superior natural environment is suitable for growth of trees. China is the origin of tea, the mountains had a large number of wild tea trees, created the conditions for temples to build up tea garden.

On the other hand, Buddhism advocates tea to help practice. tea is used for serving Buddha, and treating guests. therefore, while advocating monks drinking tea, temple monks are also advocated to grow tea, pick tea and make tea. After the Tang Dynasty, with the spread, development of Buddhism in China and the maturity of tea culture, the temple growing tea become popular, and form a large scale. in order to grow "Gong tea", Some temples carry out a detailed division of labor, tea picking monks, tea making monks and quality inspector monks. After the Tang Dynasty, the temple was integrated with the tea itself. Tea planting, tea picking, tea frying, tea boiling , and tea tasting has become an indispensable part for the temple.

Third, monks Serving Buddha with tea. Guests who goes to tea, All oil pockets are filled with tea-leaf.(客赴茶者,皆以油囊盛餘瀝以歸).⁷Temples all have "Dian tea" or "Tea for Buddha", and there are many details about the process of serving tea to Buddha, which are written into ChanLin monastic regulations , a book records the rules of monks. Especially in the Tang Dynasty, when the process of Sinicization of Buddhism was basically completed and Buddhism flourished, the tea ceremony of Zen had become a common trend to provide tea for Buddhism and formed fixed Zen rules in monasteries. According to ChanLin monastic regulations , In various Buddhist festivals, such as Halloween, Qianqiu Festival, national Day, the day Buddha fell to the birth, Emperor Shi are supported by tea soup.

Fourth, there rises Tea ceremony of Buddhist. Since the Tang Dynasty, it can be said that the monks have regarded tea as meditation, meditation and enlightenment, Drinking tea has become a daily routine of Buddhist monasteries. There is a place called cha liao in the temple, which is a place for Zen monk tasting tea and debating Buddha and entertain the donor. There is also a monk specially manage the offering tea for Buddha, the public serving tea.

Buddhism attaches importance of tea drinking, making drinking tea has gradually become a part of the Zen temple system. Since the Tang Dynasty, many temples have formed a complete set of specific tea drinking procedures and etiquette on the basis of the Qing rules, and often held tea parties, Tiantai Mountain Wannian Temple, Yuhang Jingshan Temple, Dancheng County Tiantong Temple when encountered the Dynasty celebration, they will hold a grand tea ceremony. Among them of the more famous is Zhejiang Yuhang Jingshan Tea Banquet.⁸ At the tea banquet, people sit and talk about the Buddhist scriptures, perform the tea ceremony, sing poems and lyrics. The solemn tea ceremony, tea banquet, with superb aesthetic thought, aesthetic interest and artistic environment, therefore, it contributes to the spread of tea culture, and directly leads to the overall prosperity and Zen enlightenment of Chinese tea culture.

⁷ Feng Fei 馮費, *yunxian zaji* 雲仙雜記 [Vincent's Stories], (Shanghai, Shanghai Classics Publishing House), p672.

⁸ Gang Fu 岡夫, *cha wenhua* 茶文化 [The Tea Culture], (Beijing, Economic Press China).

Fifth, tea is taken in participating in Zen. Since Buddhism was introduced into China in the Han Dynasty, the integration of Zen and tea has become more and more extensive. From sitting in meditation and drinking tea, using tea to quench thirst to the temple growing tea on a large scale, from treating guests with tea to serving Buddhists with tea, tea is introduced into the solemn religious instrument, the tea classics became the monks' Zen enlightenment and an indispensable part of ordinary life.

The monks also combine the philosophical spirit of Zen with tea through the creation of the artistic conception of drinking tea. Tea is clean, and the tea flavor is light. Drinking tea can make people calm, thoughtful, non-chaotic, not annoying and restrained. Tea is "clean" and "blunt". The spiritual and cultural connotation is to face all emotional entanglements with an indifferent heart. Without fame and wealth disputes, they maintain their own calm state of mind. This mood is connected with Zen, and it is close to "clear heart" and "enlightenment into a Buddha".

Now, let's see the mental property of Zen-tea Culture together. Zen-tea culture is the gradual integration of tea and Zen cultures with each other in its long development history. So it not only absorbs the inherent dilute, peaceful, elegant characteristics of tea culture, but also with the peaceful religious practice, quiet and suitable state of Zen is interlinked.⁹

China's tea-Zen culture's cultural connotation will inevitably be reflected by the traditional culture dominated by Buddhist sound. All in general, the spiritual characteristics of Chinese-Zen tea culture can be summarized as harmony, elegant, clear and silent. Harmony is the essence of traditional culture, elegant is the original characteristics of Chinese tea culture, clear is the common essence of tea and Zen, Silence is the embodiment of the realm of religious practice.

Tasting tea in Zen is the refining and brief summary of the Zen-tea culture, the profound meaning contained in it is also unable to elaborate perfectly. According to the author, tea and Zen are finally unified in the realm of physical and mental practice and enlightenment, that is to say, tea and Zen communicated at the moral level of spiritual cultivation and the religious level of spiritual enlightenment. On the one hand, the temple tea ceremony has some prescribed procedures and ceremonies, through which monks practice their body and mind, With the help of tea cultivation to achieve the enlightenment realm of Zen, this is the process from tea to Zen. On the other hand, when reached the enlightenment realm of Zen, but also to integrate the enlightenment of themselves into the life, continue to maintain the enlightenment in the life, the realm, to achieve unity. In this way, tea has become the best material load of the Zen realm in real life, the tea ceremony becomes an external manifestation of Zen, which is the process from Zen to tea. Tasting Zen in tea finally returns to normal. In the natural life, the taste of tea and Zen is the nature of life, the ordinary taste of life.

In modern life, people are more of a fast life model. Anxiety, impetuosity has also become an important label of modern life. In modern society, what the public eagers to perceive is a "fast-paced" life mode, which is obviously different from the connotation of Zen tea culture. In terms of the modern lifestyle of the public, the content that people generally consume is more of material elements, and in lack of effective attention and comprehensive integration of spiritual concepts. Therefore, it has become inevitable to change the life model and introduce new life elements appeal in the daily life of the public. Modern life is a way of connotation and mature life. The correct cultural concept elements not only affect the public's own perception of life, but also are related to the public's own life happiness. The meditation and quiet living habits advocated in the Chinese

⁹ Chen Wenhua 陳文華, *changjiang liuyu chawenhua* 長江流域茶文化 [Tea Culture in the Region on Yangtze River], (Hubei, Hubei Education Press), p293.

traditional tea and Zen culture can effectively guide the public themselves to relieve personal pressure in time. However, we must also see that the current living environment can no longer provide a relevant environment for people to read the Zen tea culture. In more cases, what it needs is the personal understanding and perception of the public itself. In particular, Zen tea culture itself is a morphological understanding and perception, so giving full play to its own understanding and perception has become the key to Zen tea culture to play its own value under the modern life mode. The idea of Tea-Zen culture lies in the interior design, design of clothing, furniture, and jewelry. All in all, in today's presentation, I have explored the idea of tasting zen in tea, showing the combination of zen and tea, and the meaning of mental property of it.

This is all for my presentation today. Any feedback and suggestions would be welcome!

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