

Tea Industry Terms in International Cultural Exchange

Dr. Huong Giang Le Thi*

¹Faculty of Philology, Thai Nguyen University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i05.003](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i05.003)

| Received: 12.04.2024 | Accepted: 15.05.2024 | Published: 17.05.2024

*Corresponding author: Dr. Huong Giang Le Thi

Faculty of Philology, Thai Nguyen University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

Abstract

Review Article

The article is based on linguistic theoretical issues about the tea industry term, characteristics of craft village culture, and Vietnamese community culture to delve into how tea industry terms contribute to reflecting the Vietnamese lifestyle and international cultural exchanges. Research results indicate that through the way of making and drinking tea, Vietnamese people have learned life experiences, how to behave between people in society, and the relationship between people and nature. Particularly, the tea industry and its terms serve as a bridge, embodying the distinctive features of craft village culture, community culture, and cultural exchanges in the era of globalization.

Keywords: Term, tea industry, exchange, culture, international.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese tea drinking culture has a very long history. After the tea leaves are made, they become a beautiful yellow tea cup with a cool aroma and sweet taste left behind, which is an artistic process. The way Vietnamese people appreciate and brew tea is intricate and refined. While Vietnam may not have a formal tea ceremony like Japan, in *every ingredient, utensil, brewing method, pouring technique, and enjoyment process*, it reflects the unique cultural traits of the Vietnamese people.

Tea is regarded as a means of facilitating communication. Vietnamese people often exhibit a reserved and subtle communication style, making it challenging to directly engage in conversations. Tea cups help Vietnamese people initiate conversations more easily. Additionally, serving tea also demonstrates the respect and hospitality of the Vietnamese people.

Furthermore, tea cups symbolize community cohesion. It's about sharing delicious tea pots. Vietnamese people are busy and toiling year-round with their agricultural work. Yet, a bowl of fresh tea water helps them bond and become closer. The emotional connection between people is simple, without class distinctions; everyone gathers around the tea pot, drinks tea together, and shares ordinary life stories. Through solidarity and sharing, we can see how the volume of the tea pot and cups can adapt to ensure everyone enjoys the same tea pot.

Through the way Vietnamese people enjoy tea, we can clearly see the characteristic of the rice-based agricultural culture's closeness to nature. The ingredients used to brew tea are sourced from nature, and the utensils used for tea brewing are crafted from natural materials. Moreover, Vietnamese tea-drinking spaces are often set amidst natural landscapes, spacious and serene.

Through the way of making and drinking tea, Vietnamese people have learned life experiences, how to behave between people in society, and the relationship between people and nature.

This article is based on the exploration and analysis of tea industry terms from the perspective of reflecting Vietnamese culture to analyze the position and role of tea industry terms in expressing international cultural exchanges.

2. Formation and development process of tea plants and tea culture in Vietnam

2.1. Formation and development process of tea plants in Vietnam

Primitive tea plants are believed to have existed around 4 000 to 5 000 years ago. Vietnamese archaeologists have discovered traces of tea leaves and fossilized tea plants in Phu Tho province. In Suoi Giang (Van Chan, Nghia Lo), there is a wild tea forest with tens of thousands of plants, including three ancient tea plants reaching heights of 6 - 8 meters, requiring three people to embrace them. In Lang Son province, another wild tea

forest was found, with plants reaching up to 18 meters in height. Since ancient times, tea has become a drink as well as a medicine in the daily lives of ancient Vietnamese people.

According to ancient legends, tea has been used for a long time in Vietnam (formerly known as Indochina) and China, But the spread of tea plants is not as fast as that of tobacco plants. In Vietnam, after a thousand years of Northern domination, the Vietnamese tea growing industry gradually developed. Originating from the exploitation of Vietnamese products in general and the tea industry in particular by Northern feudalism, it contributed to shaping and strongly developing the Vietnamese tea industry.

It wasn't until the 18th and 19th centuries, during the period of booming economic exchanges, that the tea industry flourished in Vietnam, China, Laos, and beyond. This time, it was not only in Asia but also in Europe and Africa.

During the French colonial period, the colonial authorities recognized Vietnam as one of the homelands of tea. Therefore, in 1924-1925, they established a tea trading company and organized tea research camps in Phu Tho province to develop tea plantations in the northern region of the country. Vietnamese tea became one of the commodities contributing to economic development and cultural exchange. Vietnamese tea officially integrated into cultural exchanges with its own characteristics: The cultural structure of Vietnamese tea includes indigenous culture on the Indochinese peninsula (*fresh tea, dried tea, scented tea*), cultural exchanges with China (*Chinese tea, oolong tea, etc.*), Japanese culture (*powdered tea, tea ceremony, etc.*), and Western culture (*black tea, tea bags, fast-dissolving tea, Western-style tea, chamomile tea, etc.*).

Thus, tea culture has become a distinctive and refined aspect of Vietnamese culture. Not as elaborate as the tea ceremony in Japan, nor as mystical as Chinese tea, the tradition of drinking tea among Vietnamese people has existed for centuries, simple, rustic, and full of sentiment. Vietnamese tea is often divided into three types: *scented tea, dried tea, and fresh tea*. Scented tea is a characteristic type of tea in Vietnam, enjoying a cup of deeply fragrant tea brings a sense of relaxation and comfort to the drinker. It embodies both elegance and harmony between nature and humanity. In Vietnamese tea, six types of flowers are commonly used to infuse the tea: Jasmine, Chrysanthemum, Mock lemon, Sarcandra, Osmanthus fragrans, and Lotus. Enjoying a cup of Vietnamese tea with a light golden-green color, clear and transparent, the scent of tea and flowers blending together, creates profound meanings. The bitter taste of tea evokes the hardships and diligence of the Vietnamese people, while the mellow taste of the flowers speaks to the rich emotions and sentiments of the Vietnamese soul.

Drinking tea, seemingly simple, can connect people more closely.

According to the reception of the Vietnamese people, with their agricultural roots in the South, Vietnamese tea culture has a two-way communication relationship with Chinese tea culture and Western tea culture.

2.2. The tea industry term contributes to reflecting the lifestyle of the Vietnamese people

In the Vietnamese tea appreciation, there isn't the rigid ritualism of the Japanese tea ceremony, yet it still carries a deeply Vietnamese sophistication. A cup of Vietnamese tea is not just about drinking water; it's a meaningful experience. The color of the tea is clear and transparent, golden-green, the gentle scent of tea combined with the scent of natural flowers create an image of golden forests and silver seas, Vietnam's rich resources. The bitter taste evokes the hardships of the tea maker, while the sweet aftertaste represents the rich, loyal soul of the Vietnamese people. The art of tea appreciation reflects the Vietnamese people's behavior, from the respectful serving of tea to the enjoyment of its flavor, all demonstrating the refinement and profundity of traditional Vietnamese culture.

2.2.1. Demonstrating sophistication and intricacy

Vietnamese tea culture has existed for a long time. The process of brewing and enjoying tea is an art form, from selecting ingredients to processing, brewing, and pouring tea, all done with meticulousness and sophistication. Although there's no strict "tea ceremony" like in Japan, Vietnamese people still showcase their distinctive culture through each step of the tea-drinking process.

The most important ingredients for brewing tea are water and tea leaves. Vietnam offers a variety of tea types, from Moc Cau tea to other teas like Dinh Ngoc, each with its own flavor and color. The tea processing procedure is also unique, such as the "5 extremes" tea from the Snow Shan Suoi Giang tea, only harvested during a specific short period of the harvesting season.

Tea processing and ingredient selection depend on various factors such as weather, humidity, and the care of the hands that tend to them. Water used for brewing tea is carefully selected from natural springs, and it could even be water collected from lotus leaves early in the morning.

The tea brewing process requires delicacy and dedication. Brewing tea is also quite intricate, from boiling water to pouring tea into the cup. Each step must be executed skillfully to preserve the tea's flavor.

After brewing, enjoying tea is a process that demands tranquility and aesthetic appreciation. It's not

just about quenching thirst; drinking tea is also a way to contemplate life. The choice of tea set and the tea-drinking space are also carefully selected to create a peaceful and noble ambiance.

Vietnamese tea culture is also demonstrated through the gesture of offering tea, symbolizing hospitality and respect for guests. Drinking tea is not just an action; it's also a cultural behavior.

2.2.2. Reflecting a tactful communication style

Vietnamese people enjoy communication but also tend to be reserved, prioritizing emotions and social relationships. They often initiate conversations in a polite and indirect manner, preferring to observe and understand before engaging in discussions. The tradition of starting a conversation often involves offering tea or using rituals like offering the betel and areca-nut to create a communicative atmosphere.

The tea-drinking custom is indispensable in every Vietnamese household. The betel and areca-nut and tea cups are considered the starting point for conversations. Brewing tea and offering guests tea demonstrate respect and politeness. Vietnamese people are also careful when pouring tea to ensure each cup is flavorful and without making loud noises. Drinking tea is also seen as a philosophy of tranquility and diplomacy.

Tea is the drink of farmers who appreciate a stable, peaceful, and tranquil life. When drinking tea, Vietnamese people are neither overly elaborate nor overly simple, neither overly ceremonial nor too casual. It's a wise combination, gracefully leading to perfection, to moderation in the art of tea appreciation.

3. Tea culture in countries around the world

3.1. Transmission and development process in ancient Southeast Asia and China

China has four main tea-growing regions: Jiangnan, Jiangbei, Southwest, and Lingnan. Jiangnan and Jiangbei are famous for various green teas, Lingnan produces oolong tea, while the Southwest produces many black teas and compressed teas. Overall, China currently has over 200 types of tea, including 50 famous and high-quality varieties. *Dung Khe Hoa Thanh* tea is a specialty of Kinh district, An Huy province, made from the "Kim Ngan tea" (White tea) grown on Dung Khe mountain. This type of tea appeared during the Ming dynasty and later became the tea served to the emperor, thriving during the Qing dynasty. *Tay Son* tea originated from the Tay Son region in Que Binh district (Guangxi). *Thiet Quan Am* tea is a product of the An Khe region (Fujian). *Hang Chau Bich La Xuan* tea is from the Thai Ho Dong Dinh mountain range, Ngo district, Jiangsu (this name was given by King Kangxi, the old name of the tea was "Nhan Huong"). *Hue Minh* tea is named after a temple near the foot of Canh Ninh mountain in Au Giang (Zhejiang). *Cuu Khuc hong mai* (also known as *Cuu*

Khuc hong or *Cuu Khuc Oolong*) originated from the Cuu Khuc riverbank, Tiền Đường (Hangzhou), the tea leaves resemble small dragons, and when brewed, the water has a bright pink hue. Oolong tea is found in the deep mountains of An Khe (Fujian), according to legend discovered by the hunter Ho Luong by chance. *Quan Son ngan cham* is a tea only served to the emperor, named by Emperor Ming Tong...

Today, in China, there are still special tea gardens belonging to the forbidden category, where no one is allowed to pick or loiter in the restricted area. Because this is where super-premium teas are produced, formerly used to serve the emperor and now reserved for the upper class.

3.2. Transmission and development process to Southeast Asia, West Asia and Europe

The first Europeans to learn about tea were Portuguese merchants when they opened a trading post in Macau (China) in 1577. In 1606, the Netherlands imported the first batches of tea to Europe. France became acquainted with tea in 1636. As soon as tea was introduced to the Netherlands and France, it quickly became popular among the aristocracy.

With the pronunciation /tê/ prevalent in Minnan dialects, the word "tea" spread to a variety of other languages: English (tea), French (thé), German (Tee), Russian (чай), Yiddish (the), Spanish (té), Danish, Dutch (thee), Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish (te), Estonian, Latvian, Hungarian, Aixelen, Latin, Italian (tè), Hebrew ('תה', /te/ or /tei/), Sinhalese, Tamil (thè), Indonesian, Malay...

England is the European country with the most widespread tea-drinking customs, so the word "tea" in English also has a broad range of meanings. It is used to refer to: (1) dried tea leaves or a beverage brewed with boiling water into tea leaves; (2) a beverage brewed with boiling water into the leaves of other plants (herbal tea); (3) a light meal in the afternoon, drinking tea accompanied by sandwiches or pastries. The word "thé" in French, while not as broad in meaning, distinguishes between "le théier" as the tea plant and "le thé" as the processed tea product.

Along with the introduction of tea to Europe, the tea market expanded rapidly, and tea processing techniques were soon mechanized and industrialized. Starting in 1870, machines began to be used in processing. From 1880, the rolling, drying, and sorting processes were mechanized in many countries. There was a collaboration between tea producers, scientific researchers on tea, and specialized professionals to assess the quality (taste) of tea. Since 1925 in Dooars (northeast India), small tea-cutting machines have been used before fermentation, reducing the labor required for

tea fermentation, rolling, and improving the color of the brewed tea.

3.3. Tea in the modern world

In the modern world, tea drinking has become a familiar aspect of daily life in many countries, seen as a natural necessity. For many nations, tea has become a symbol of their distinct cultural heritage, elevated to an art form, a sort of doctrine. Japan is a prime example, where the Japanese tea ceremony has become an art form and a renowned cultural symbol worldwide. In Europe, the French, English, and Spanish all consider tea as an essential part of human life. They have constructed, perpetuated, and developed tea culture with many fascinating and appealing aspects.

In the West, people have innovated ways to drink tea (black tea) mixed with sugar, fresh milk, or honey. The English are very meticulous in selecting tea-making utensils and drinking tea. Their teapots and teacups are intricately designed, with exquisite and meticulous engravings. Unlike the Chinese, the English are not too elaborate in tea preparation. Their brewing process is very simple. Just a tea bag brewed with hot water is ready to use. The English typically add milk to their tea. Additionally, a variety of cakes and pastries are often served alongside tea. The assortment of accompanying pastries is diverse and rich, making a tea party more delightful and flavorful.

In Russia, tea is enjoyed after main meals and during afternoon breaks. Unlike the "afternoon tea" of England, Russian "чай" can be served at any time of day, anywhere, in parks, offices, or even in cars. Russian families also often host tea parties to invite friends and relatives to join. Although tea bags are extremely popular worldwide today, Russians still prefer to drink tea from teapots filled with boiling water. Additionally, Russians do not drink tea directly from the teapot; they dilute the tea. Therefore, a tea set always includes a separate vessel for holding hot water. Particularly, tea is best enjoyed when paired with honey. Honey is placed in special bowls and pitchers. During the tea party, each person takes a bowl with honey and adds a spoonful of tea.

People in the Middle East also add various spices like cinnamon, anise, ginger, etc., to their tea. Perhaps due to the intense heat in the region, they cannot counteract the heat by drinking iced tea, but rather by using a "poison to counteract poison" method, drinking hot tea infused with hot spices to balance the internal and external temperatures (similar to how they cope with heat by wearing thick layers of clothing to keep their bodies covered).

In Vietnam, tea has also been present very early in every family meal, on the ancestral altar, festivals, and on every significant occasion in people's lives. In China, there is a saying: "Opening the door to solve seven

problems: firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar, tea". This shows that tea has completely entered the lives of the people, being a part of daily expenses and a concern for everyday life. In Chinese culinary culture, tea is an important element, not inferior to any dish. In terms of relaxation, entertainment, and enjoyment, it is even considered more common, elegant, and interesting.

In terms of ingredients, tea nowadays can be blended with various flavors such as strawberry, orange, apple, grape, lemon, etc., creating a diverse range of tastes. In terms of form, aside from loose leaf tea steeped in boiling water, there are tea bags like Lipton, Dilma, instant tea; bottled tea is also available. Many products use tea as a flavoring agent: tea powder can be mixed with necessary ingredients to make pastries, ice cream, dishes, or even used in skincare products, toothpaste, etc.

However, the predominant form of tea suitable for industrial society is instant tea (also known as quick soluble tea or tea granules). Instant tea began to appear in 1959 in Switzerland, then spread to the United States... The advantage of this type of tea is its rapid solubility, leaving no residue, and simple preparation.

To produce this type of tea, the raw materials are prepared similarly to black or green tea. Then, the soluble substances are extracted with hot water. Catalysts (potassium permanganate, in a ratio of 0.05%) are also used to enhance the oxidation process. The extracted liquid is filtered and vacuum-dried, then can be mixed with sugar and other fragrances such as lemon essence, orange essence, apple essence... if additional flavors are desired. Afterwards, it can be processed into instant tea powder using a spray dryer or freeze dryer, or compressed into tablets.

Currently, the world processes around 3 million tons of tea annually and consumes about 900 billion cups of tea. Tea is grown in over 40 countries worldwide, primarily concentrated in Asian countries such as China, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Nepal... Outside of Asia, Kenya in Africa, Argentina in the Americas, and Australia are also significant tea-producing countries. Sri Lankan and Taiwanese teas are still branded as "Ceylon" as a special trademark. According to the Vietnam Tea Association, Vietnam ranks fifth in the world in terms of tea-growing area and eighth in terms of tea production.

4. CONCLUSION

Vietnamese tea drinking culture has a very long history. After the tea leaves are made, they become a golden-green tea cup with a cool aroma and sweet taste left behind, which is an artistic process. The method of enjoying and brewing tea in Vietnam is intricate and sophisticated. While Vietnam may not have a tea ceremony like Japan, every aspect including the ingredient, utensil, brewing method, pouring technique,

and enjoyment process reflects the unique cultural traits of the Vietnamese people. Through the practice of brewing and drinking tea, Vietnamese individuals have drawn life experiences, interpersonal behaviors in society, and the relationship between humans and nature. Particularly, the tea industry and its terms have become a bridge, shaping the distinct characteristics of village culture, community culture, and cultural exchange in the era of globalization.

REFERENCES

- Diep Quang Ban. (2012). *Dictionary of Linguistic Terms* (draft), Vietnam Education Publishing House, Hanoi.
- Do Huu Chau. (2000). *Learning about Culture through Language*, Language Journal, Issue 10.
- Hoang Thi Chau. (2004). *Vietnamese Dialectology*, Hanoi National University Publishing House.
- Pham Duc Duong. (2007). *Vietnam - Southeast Asia, Language and Culture*, Vietnam Education Publishing House, Hanoi.
- Nguyen Thien Giap. (2015). *Lexicon and Lexicology in Vietnamese*, National University Publishing House, Hanoi.
- Cao Xuan Hao. (2001). *Language and Culture*, in "Vietnamese Language, Vietnamese Literature, Vietnamese People", Tre Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City.
- Huong Lan. (2011). "Come to Thai Nguyen tea areas", Culture - Sports - Tourism Newsletter of Thai Nguyen, September+October, p. 9.
- Hoang Phe (Editor). (2000). *Vietnamese Dictionary*, Da Nang Publishing House.
- Do Ngoc Quy. (1999). *Origin of the words "trà" and "chè"*, Xua va Nay Magazine, Issue 140, May 2013.
- Tran Ngoc Them. (1998). *Exploring the Essence of Vietnamese Culture*, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House.
- Nguyen Duc Ton. (2008). *Cultural Features - Ethnic of Language and Thinking*, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi.
- Tran Quoc Vuong (Editor). (2004). *Foundations of Vietnamese Culture*, Vietnam Education Publishing House, Hanoi.