

# Decoding Tea Culture Symbols in Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels, Specifically Focused on *Tian Long Ba Bu*

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**Abstract:** **Background:** Jin Yong, a prominent Chinese author, is often associated with the culture of "tea" in China. His martial arts novels are rich in tea culture, including tea ware, tea leaves, tea ceremonies, and tea etiquette, which are all significant Chinese cultural symbols closely related to traditional Chinese cultural concepts and Jin Yong's spiritual connotations. **Methods:** This paper employs semiotic theory to decode the tea culture symbols in *Tian Long Ba Bu* (Demi Gods and Semi Devils). **Results:** Demonstrating how these symbols not only create a Jianghu (lawless world) that combines killing and etiquette but also construct emotional concepts of various ethnic groups. Furthermore, these symbols convey Jin Yong's cultural spirit of "tea and the Dao, tea and emotions, tea and people." **Conclusions:** As the novel has been internationally recognized, these tea cultural symbols have become an iconic representation of the world's perception of China.

**Keywords:** Jin Yong; *Tian Long Ba Bu*; tea culture; cultural symbols; martial arts novels

## 1. Introduction

Jin Yong, a renowned Chinese writer, expressed his love for tea through his inscription "Water's temperature gentle, people's temperature kind, the Romance of Tea across Time and Space," at the China International Tea Culture Seminar in April 1999. In addition, he also composed a poem at China National Tea Museum, "As if have met before, the green tresses and blue gown (personifying tea leaves as two girls), in March, the fragrance of tea fills the hills around." Jin Yong's passion for tea is evident in his fifteen novels, where more than half of the chapters highlight the tea culture. In particular, his work *Tian Long Ba Bu* assigns symbolic meaning to tea in the world of martial arts.

This paper offers a semiotic analysis of *Tian Long Ba Bu*. As of February 2023, the majority of studies regarding Jin Yong's tea culture are found in newspapers and prose, with only Benjudkins(2018)'s "Of Pens and Swords Jin Yong's Journey-Kung Fu Tea" in English discussing Jin Yong's life and his novels' creation and dissemination in a turbulent social environment. This literature suggests that Jin Yong's novels endure due to their patriotic core, vision of national self-determination, and cultural identity. Chinese academic journals also have limited studies, with only three representative papers. Chen Hongbo(2022)'s "A Sip of Jianghu Silence: Decoding the Tea Culture in Jin Yong's Novels" uses cultural structural theory and textual analysis to interpret tea culture in Jin Yong's novels from three perspectives: the development of tea ware, tea tree cultivation and etiquette, and the repurposing and innovation of tea cultural outlook, pointing out that the association between chivalry and tea lies in devotion and efficacy. Li Xuehua (2021) "in Tea Talk in Jianghu: On the Chivalry and Tea Culture in Jin Yong's Novels" discusses the role of tea in facilitating the construction of the world of Jin Yong's martial arts novels through the combination of tea with the martial arts Jianghu, characters in Jianghu and Jin Yong himself. Liu Yuxia(2013)'s "Tea Language in Jianghu - A Brief Discussion of Chivalry and Tea in Jin Yong's Novels" argues that tea

culture not only depicts the danger and adventure of Jianghu, portrays the heroic chivalry spirit but also actively participates in the creation of Jin Yong's novels. However, there are no studies that provide a semiotic analysis of tea culture in Jin Yong's novels.

According to the tea culture specialist Chen Wenhua(2006)'s book *Chinese Tea Culture Studies*, the definition of tea culture is comprehensive and includes "both material and spiritual wealth accumulated throughout the development of tea." It encompasses various cultural symbols such as tea utensils, tea art, tea ceremony, teahouses, tea gatherings, and tea books. Furthermore, Cassirer, a semiotician, highlighted that "symbolic thought and symbolic behavior are among the most characteristic features of human life, and that the whole progress of human culture is based on these conditions, is undeniable" (Ernst, 1954).

According to the Chinese semiotician Zhao Yiheng's book *Principles and Deduction of Semiotics*(2012), symbols are perceived as carriers of meaning, with the potential for one symbol to be interpreted by another. As such, cultural symbols serve as a medium to express certain cultural information and are integral to the development of human beings and traditional Chinese culture. The tea culture in China, from the production and tasting of tea to tea poetry, paintings, ceremonies, and etiquette, has been a significant part of China's cultural history for over 5,000 years and is a representation of Chinese life and spirit. Therefore, analysing Jin Yong's novel *Tian Long Ba Bu* and decoding its tea culture symbols from a semiotic perspective holds great research value and significance for exploring Jin Yong's tea culture spirit.

## 2. The Tea Culture Symbols in *Tian Long Ba Bu*<sup>1</sup>

The incorporation of tea culture symbols in the novel *Tian Long Ba Bu* underscores the significance of Chinese tea culture as an essential component of Chinese cultural symbol system. " Humans are symbol animals; culture is the mother of symbols and symbols are vital communication tools between cultures and are fundamental to human expression and communication" (Xu & Zhang, 2007). Tea, as a social commodity, has been imbued with certain meanings that are encoded and utilized as symbols within tea culture. The analysis of these meanings allows for the decoding of the intricate tea culture symbols present within the novel.

In 1963, *Tian Long Ba Bu* was authored, with the narrative's backdrop set in the Shao Sheng era during the reign of Emperor Zhezong in the Song Dynasty<sup>2</sup>. It has been stated that the time of Tang saw the sprouting of tea leaves, whereas in the era of Song, tea reached its prime. This was a period when the production of tea escalated, tea consumption became immensely popular, and tea houses and tea poetry culture thrived, indicating an era of growth and prosperity for Chinese tea culture. According to Meng Yuanlao chronicled the bustling tea houses in the capital city of the Northern Song Dynasty in "A Dream of Splendor in Eastern Capital", describing them as "the charm of teahouses unveiled between the hours of three and five, and fair ladies from noble lineage often meandered out at night, to savor tea's sweet embrace and reveled in the tea house's light."

Furthermore, the novel encompasses the tea culture of the Liao, Dali, Western Xia, and Tubo<sup>3</sup> kingdoms, rendering it one of Jin Yong's works with the most extensive tea culture legacy. This paper interprets the tea culture symbols from the three levels of culture - vessel culture, institutional culture, and conceptual culture - based on the role of tea culture in the novel, in conjunction with the "three-level cultural theory" of British sociologist B K Malinowski. The relationship between the three levels is interdependent.

### 2.1 Tea Utensils in Teahouses as Symbols of "Space" and "Martial Power"

The first level of culture is vessel, which expresses cultural connotations in the form of material and carriers. *The Book of Changes* emphasises the importance of the physical vessel in manifesting the metaphysical as it says "the Tao is metaphysical and , the vessel is physical." In the context of the tea ceremony, the physical elements such as the tea

room, tea utensils, and the procedures and regulations of the ceremony, among others, belong to the physical realm, while the philosophy, religion, art, and thoughts belong to the metaphysical realm. Jin Yong's martial arts world also reflects this duality, with both physical teahouses and tea utensils and metaphysical tea ceremonies. Public tea spaces such as tea stalls, tea shops, teahouses, and tea rooms serve as spatial symbols, providing a social space where people from different professions, social classes, and cultural groups gather to exchange information, socialize with friends, and attend sect meetings. However, these spaces are also where martial arts struggles often erupt between tea tables, making tea utensils, such as tea cups, teapots, tea bowls, and tea tables, temporary weapons that could end lives in an instant. In this sense, tea utensils take on a new cultural significance as symbols of "martial power" in the martial arts world. Jin Yong's use of the "Defamiliarization" technique adds to this symbolism, as tea utensils used to kill people are refreshing yet deadly, contrasting the characters' images and martial power. Ultimately, the imagery of Jianghu, martial arts, and knights are closely linked to the cultural symbolism of tea utensils.

In *Tian Long Ba Bu*, there are four instances where tea utensils are utilized as emblematic representations of martial power. These scenes are found in Chapter 6, where Nanhai E Shen engages in a competition with Duan Yu; Chapter 11, where Guo Yan Zhi, also known as "Soul Chasing Whip", becomes enraged after failing to locate Murong Gong Zi; Chapter 38, where Ha Daba, the Lord of Iron Turtle Island, engages in a battle with Jujian at the Lingjiu Palace; and Chapter 46, where Prince Zong Zan ambushes Duan Yu at the Nianxiang Palace in the Xia Kingdom. Among these instances, the most vivid one is the scene where Nanhai E Shen shatters a tea utensil with his palm wind during his battle with Duan Yu. The original text is as follows:

"Nanhai E Shen's remarkable martial arts were showcased in the drawing room as he used his palm strikes to create a cacophony of crashing and banging sounds, resulting in the destruction of various tea utensils and tables and chairs. Despite his impressive display of power, Duan Yu's agility and quick reflexes enabled him to evade the attacks." (Jin, 2013) A similar scene unfolds in the Lingjiu Palace, where Ha Daba, the Lord of Iron Tortoise Island, smashed a tea table with his bare hands during a fight with the four sisters Meijian, Lanjian, Zhujian, and Jujian, drawing the attention of all those present.

"Upon gazing at each other with admiration, a colossal figure, towering as an iron structure with deeply inflamed eyes, sprang forth, ripping his own attire. A multitude shouted in unison, 'The Ruler of Iron Turtle Island! Lord Ha Daba!' Ha Daba bellowed akin to an injured tiger, with his fists bearing the weight of an iron vessel, shattering a tea table into fragments before charging towards Jujian." (Jin, 2013) Jin Yong's depiction of the tea table as a representation of martial power not only emphasises Ha Daba's formidable physical prowess, but also vividly captures his frenzied state induced by his life and death charm.

In the context of *Tian Long Ba Bu*, the teahouse functions as a microcosm of a social network and represents a symbol of information exchange and space, with a significant role in social communication and emotional exchange. The tea utensils, such as teapots, teacups, tea bowls, and tea tables, are used as symbols of martial power, showcasing the warriors' martial prowess, courage, and readiness for battle, as well as the hazardous environment of the martial arts realm. The incorporation of tea culture symbols not only adds a new and artistic dimension to martial arts techniques but also provides a dynamic portrayal of the vibrant and intricate Jianghu, diverging from the conventional fighting scenes.

## 2.2 Tea Culture as a Symbol of Etiquette System

The second level of culture pertains to the system, which encompasses the cultural layer that concerns the dynamics between individuals and oneself, and among

individuals and others. This system represents culture in social organization and institutional behavior. In the *The Classic of Tea*<sup>4</sup> by Lu Yu during the Tang Dynasty, he chronicled that "Tea, as a beverage, originated from Shennong." (Fu & Ouyang, 1983) Chinese tea culture, which originated from Shennong, has undergone continuous refinement over thousands of years through tea production, tea drinking, tea tasting, tea appraisal techniques, and the development of social etiquette. It has given rise to the system and customs of "serving tea to guests." Tea serves as the Chinese people's way of hospitality and offering tea to guests is a constituent part of traditional Chinese etiquette culture.

Within the novel, the representation of the custom of "serving tea to guests" serves as a defining characteristic of the institutionalised tea culture system. This custom has been a longstanding tradition among the Chinese people, renowned for their hospitality. As early as the Zhou Dynasty, which dates back over 3,000 years, tea was regarded as a prized gift and tribute. Throughout the Southern and Northern Dynasties, serving tea to guests became a fundamental social etiquette for interpersonal communication, as exemplified in well-known stories such as Wang Meng's "Serving Tea to Guests", Lu Na's "Offering Tea and Fruits to Guests", and Huan Wen's "Banquet with Tea and Fruits". When welcoming guests, serving tea not only highlights the host's distinct taste and refinement but also fosters a relaxing and enjoyable ambiance for conversation(Chen, 2006).

The novel features "serving tea to guests" in ten chapters, with a total of twelve scenes taking place in eleven distinct locations, such as the Zhong's Mansion, the Mansion of Zhennan Prince, the Wan Jie Valley, Abi's private chamber, the Tianning Temple Hall, the Zhi Guan Zen Temple on Tiantai Mountain, Ma Dayuan's residence, the Xue family's residence in the North of Liu Zongzhen, the Shaolin Temple, the outside of the Qing Feng Pavilion, and Jia Lao's private room. These specific details are outlined in the following table:

Chapter Number	Scene Number	Content
2	1	Duan Yu came to the Zhong's Mansion to find Zhong Ling and was served with tea.
6	1	Duan Yu and his companies arrived at the Prince Zhen Nan's Mansion, where servants presented them with tea in a respectful manner.
9	2	1.Duan Yu and his companions arrived at the Wan Jie Valley and were served tea in the main hall. 2.The Shaolin monks Hui Zhen and Hui Guan were invited to Prince Zhen Nan's Mansion to have tea after delivering news of Grand Master Xuan Bei's passing.
11	1	When Duan Yu and Jiu Mo Zhi went to find Mu Rong Gongzi, they were led by maid Abi to her private chamber where they drank tea and ate snacks.
18	1	At the Tian Ning Temple, He Lian Tie Shu welcomed Nanhai E Shen and Duan Yu, picking up a teacup and saying, "Please have some tea."
21	2	1.Qiao Feng and A Zhu visited Zen Master Zhi Guang at the Zhi Guan Temple on Mount Tiantai, where Puzhe

		served them tea. 2.Qiao Feng and A Zhu arrived at Ma Dayuan's residence, where Mrs. Ma invited them inside for tea.
29	1	Xuan Nan and his companions had tea in the main hall of Xue's residence in the North of Liu Zongzhen
39	1	Yuan Zhen invited Xu Zhu to the Shaolin Temple's dining hall, where he personally served tea and rice. Three days later, he again brewed a pot of tea and invited Xu Zhu to drink it.
46	1	Princess Yinchuan of the Western Xia Kingdom invited heroes from all over to have tea outside the Qing Feng Pavilion.
47	1	Jia Laozhe invited Zhu Dan Chen and Duan Yu to the inner hall for a cup of tea.

Offering tea to guests serves as both a symbol of hospitality and a means for martial arts practitioners to engage in social interaction. These etiquette customs are observed not only in the rugged world of Jianghu but also in sophisticated settings like royal courts. Jin Yong's portrayal of tea culture's etiquette symbols infuses a sense of humanity into the violent and bloody Jianghu realm.

### 2.3 Tea Culture Symbols that Express Emotional Concepts

The third level of culture pertains to human mentality and spiritual activities, encompassing national character, ideological and moral values, and thinking patterns. Chinese culture emphasises the unity of material and spiritual aspects, as represented by the adage "the medium is the message," which underscores the need for tea culture symbols to be linked to people's emotional concepts. According to Saussure, symbols have a binary relationship between signifier and signified, with the former referring to the sound and form of linguistic symbols and the latter to their meaning. Zhao Yiheng(2012) also posits that "symbols are perceptible with meaning". As such, symbols are closely related to meaning. The significance of tea culture as one of the most representative cultural symbols of the Chinese nation lies in its ability to reflect the cultural genes and national character of the Chinese people, having rendered the national emotions and life concepts of ancestors throughout thousands of years of tea activities. As a nationally recognized spiritual symbol, tea embodies meanings such as "harmony, respect, purity, elegance, incorruptibility, and beauty" (Huang, 2010). Tea culture symbols have the power to evoke a sense of collective identity and move people with a shared cultural background. Jin Yong, for instance, employed tea as a tool to convey his characters' concepts and personalities, such as in scenes like "Guo Jing not recognizing Longjing tea," "Tibetan prince liking buttered tea," "Wei Xiaobao listening to storytelling in the teahouse," and "Wei Xiaobao's brothel tea party."

In *Tian Long Ba Bu*, the representation of tea culture is multifaceted, encompassing both a favorable depiction of traits such as "light, incorruptible, elegant, and harmonious" and a nuanced portrayal of non-stereotypical tea names and shapes with distinct ethnic flavors. The use of two tea names, namely "Scaring People Fragrance"<sup>5</sup> and "Buttered Tea"<sup>6</sup>, is particularly noteworthy, as they offer rich and unfamiliar features that enable Jin Yong to illustrate the unique character traits and emotional concepts of the Song and Tubo people from diverse perspectives.

In Chapter 11 of the novel "The son of Prince of Zhen Nan" Duan Yu, "The Golden Abacus" Cui Baiquan, "The Soul Chasing Whip" Guo Yanzhi, and "Mahā-cakra" Jiumozhi had planned to visit Canhe Village but ended up getting lost. They were then led by a maid named Abi to Qin Yun Xiao Zhu in Yanziwu, where they were offered tea. Upon entering the hall, Abi requested that everyone take a seat while male servants served tea and pastries. Duan Yu was pleasantly surprised by the fragrance emitted by the tea and the sight of the light green tea with ultramarine tea leaves like tiny beads covered with fine fur. After taking a sip, he was struck by the refreshing taste and unique aroma. Jiumozhi, Cui Baiquan, and Guo Yanzhi were initially hesitant to try the unfamiliar tea. The round pearl-shaped tea leaves were a regional specialty from the mountains surrounding Taihu Lake, known as "Biluochun" in later years. At the time of the story, locals referred to it as "Scaring People Fragrance" due to its potent aroma. Jiumozhi, who was accustomed to drinking bitter black tea bricks, found the green tea's appearance peculiar and even suspected it might be poisonous. (Jin, 2013)

The term "Scaring People Fragrance" actually refers to Biluochun tea, as recorded in the Qing Dynasty book *Wild History Collection(Volume 1)*. The book documents that locals picked wild tea plants on the stone walls of the Biluo Peak in Dongting East Mountain during a certain year of the Kangxi reign, and when the tea was placed in a warm place, it emitted a unique and fragrant aroma that was so potent that the pickers exclaimed, "Scaring people fragrance." The term "Scaring people" is a Wu dialect, and it was named as such. Governor Song Luo later purchased this tea as a tribute to the central government and changed its inelegance name from "Scaring People Fragrance" to Biluochun. Since then, the local officials had collected and offered it as tribute every year.

If this historical record is accurate, then Biluochun tea originated from the Ming Dynasty, flourished in the Qing Dynasty, and it is understandable why characters like Duan Yu, Cui Baiquan, Guo Yanzhi, and Jiumozhi from the Song Dynasty novel did not recognize it. In the text, the "full of fine fur" and "greenish tea water" appearance features of Biluochun are also attributed to the "unfamiliar" cultural characteristics of the tea. Even for well-traveled and knowledgeable characters like Duan Yu, Cui Baiquan, Guo Yanzhi, and Jiumozhi, do not dare to drink it and even "suspected it to be poisonous." The description of "Scaring People Fragrance" foreshadows the later plot of Guo Yanzhi's excessive suspicion and attempt to attack the maid Abi.

Another cultural aspect that may be unfamiliar to some is the consumption of Buttered Tea. In chapter 45 of the novel, the "Yinchuan Princess" of the Western Xia Kingdom was seeking a husband, and the warriors accompanying the Prince of Tubo Zongzan insulted Murong Fu in the inn's courtyard "You want to marry the Western Xia Princess, which has angered our young prince. 'Deal with a man as he deals with you.' He will marry your sister as a concubine and make her drink buttered tea every day in Tubo. She will be very happy"(Jin, 2013). This passage highlights the daily consumption of buttered tea among the Tubo people, which is not a drink native to the Song Dynasty, but rather a national beverage of the Tibetan people, thus making it an unfamiliar cultural aspect. The custom of drinking buttered tea among the Tibetan people can be traced back to Princess Wencheng<sup>7</sup>, who introduced tea leaves from the mainland and personally made cheese and butter to create buttered tea when she went to Tibet. She gave it as a gift to her ministers, and since then, buttered tea has become an important part of the ceremonial etiquette of giving to ministers and guests. Over time, it has become a popular dietary custom among the Tibetan people (You, 2018), rich in ethnic characteristics and cultural connotations, serving as a daily drink and a symbol of hospitality. In chapter 46 of the novel, the Prince of Tubo Zongzan's habit of drinking buttered tea reflects his bold and generous character as a plateau ethnic group. The description of his tea-drinking ritual includes: "first, lifted the lid of the cup; next, poured a cup of tea with tea leaves into his mouth, chewing the tea leaves incessantly; and then before he finished swallowing the tea leaves, he grabbed some colorful snacks

and stuffed them into his mouth quickly." These unfamiliar symbolic characteristics of buttered tea, combined with the bold and unrestrained character traits of the Tubo people, create an image of an arrogant, fierce, and noble barbarian.

The representation of unfamiliar aspects of tea culture in Jin Yong's novels is enhanced by the use of the "Defamiliarization" technique. From the perspective of Song dynasty characters, Jin Yong skillfully portrays their caution and unease towards unfamiliar elements and surroundings that are not typical of their own culture. He closely associates tea with the emotional concepts of his characters, thereby driving their psychological activities and emotional transformations. Additionally, he links the ethnic traits of tea to the personalities of Tibetan characters, thereby enriching their unique attributes and ideological concepts. Furthermore, Jin Yong employs various artistic techniques, including contrast, rendering, association, and metaphor, to establish connections between individuals and tea, deepen their emotional concepts, advance the plot, and shape enduring ethnic characters. The use of tea culture symbols adds richness to the multi-ethnic Jianghu atmosphere and strengthens the work's traditional cultural legacy. Readers will recall these vivid characters and scenes long after reading the novel whenever tea is mentioned.

### 3. the Spirit of Tea Culture in Jin Yong's Works

The novel *Tian Long Ba Bu* provides an extensive depiction of tea culture symbols, highlighting the author's profound knowledge and appreciation of tea. Tea culture holds significant cultural value not only within Jin Yong's martial arts world, but also in his daily life. Cassirer posited that, In human's ideology, culture reveals the nature and characteristics of humanity, therefore, to comprehend humanity, an examination of their culture and accomplishments is imperative. To gain insight into the spiritual essence of Jin Yong's martial arts novels, a decoding of the tea culture symbols is essential.(Ernst, 1953) In *Tian Long Ba Bu*, the tea culture spirit is embodied in three key aspects: tea and the Tao, tea and emotions, and tea and people.

#### 3.1 Making Friends with Tea, Discussing the Dao with Tea

Tea holds a significant cultural value for the Chinese nation and serves as a spiritual nourishment for its people. While indulging in its aesthetic taste, Chinese individuals also incorporate traditional humanistic connotations such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism into the tea ceremony. This allows them to meditate on the Dao, appreciate life, and purify the soul. The tea ceremony is a manifestation of the national spirit and character, as well as an external representation of moral concepts. The aforementioned 12 scenarios depicting the "serving tea to guests" symbolise the spirit of "making friends with tea, discussing the Dao with tea."

Individuals in the martial arts community often bond over tea and discuss critical matters. Irrespective of their guest's origins, they are always invited to the inner hall for a small drink, which signifies "making friends with tea." For instance, when Qiao Feng discovered his Khitan ancestry and the animosity between his biological father Xiao Yuanshan and the Han people, he approached Zen master Zhi Guang for guidance. According to historical records, high-ranking monks were fond of drinking tea and entertaining guests with tea. The "Fu Cha Tang" regulation in the "Rules of the Zen Temples" stipulates that guests must be served tea at the entrance to show respect, and invited guests must not be neglected. Furthermore, tea is one of the ways for monks to enter into meditation. Tea enhances concentration and helps individuals realize the Dao during Zen meditation. Zen master Zhi Guang was a tea enthusiast who, after drinking tea, advised Qiao Feng to treat Han and Khitan people equally, despite his identity when he wrote "All things are equal, all living beings are equal; Saints and beasts are treated equally; Han and Khitan people are both illusions and realities; Gratitude and

resentment, honor and disgrace, will all become dust." (Jin, 2013), which signified "discussing the Dao with tea."

The cultural significance of tea in *Tian Long Ba Bu* is evidenced by its representation as a symbol of "discussing the Tao". The notion of the "Interconnection of Zen and Tea on a Spiritual Level" underscores the cultural importance of tea as a means of appreciating its taste and understanding the Tao. Additionally, the movement of tea leaves in water embodies the ebbs and flows of life and the need to let go. Engaging in life discussions with tea is therefore a profound expression of the tea spirit. This sentiment is evident not only in the novel but also in the daily life of its author, Jin Yong. Drinking tea was a customary practice in the 1960s and 1970s in Hong Kong, as is evidenced by Jin Yong's frequent references to tea in his autobiography, interviews, and literary works. As an honorary chairman of the China International Tea Culture Research Association, he was also known to speak about tea wherever he went, often citing his own work with expressions such as aforementioned "Water's temperature gentle, people's temperature kind, the Romance of Tea across Time and Space," ; "Sipping Longjing tea by the lake, while walking in the sky."; "In this life, I am blessed / To taste the tea of Wuyi /Beneath the mountain where / Song and dance enrapture me. / The art of tea, the art of dance / Are both exquisite and divine / And I am grateful to be / A Wuyi person in this time." (Meng, 2018) etc. In 2003, Jin Yong founded the Jin Yong Tea House by West Lake, with the intent of creating a space where tea lovers could come together to discuss literature and appreciate tea. This manifestation of his tea culture spirit exemplifies his philosophy of "making friends with tea and discussing the Tao with tea" in real life as he stated in the article "About the 'Jin Yong Tea House'", "'Jin Yong Tea House' is for everyone, from nine to ninety years old, to come and brew a cup of Longjing... It's a pleasure to make friends and enjoy the elegant atmosphere together!" (Jin, 2003). He also jokingly referred to himself as a "Cha (tea)<sup>8</sup> Doctor" after opening the tea house, as his real surname, Cha, has the same pronunciation as "tea" in Chinese.

### 3.2 The Emotional Significance of Tea in "Lingering Fragrance"

As one of the oldest civilizations in the world, China has developed and preserved numerous traditional cultures over its long history. These cultures not only reflect the beliefs and spirits of the Chinese people, but also serve as a source of emotional nourishment. In the novels of Jin Yong, tea is imbued with rich emotional elements, and its use as a tool for conveying feelings is evident in various scenes. Examples include the "tea-inspired love" between Guo Jing and Huang Rong; the tea conversations between Wen Tailai and Yu Yu; the tea-drinking and idea-exchanging moments of Dongxie, Xidu and Beigai and Xiao Feng's tea-feeding of Azi. These tea-related sentiments are exquisitely delicate, and contribute to the creation of a beautiful narrative within Jinghu.

Jin Yong's perspective on love is a poignant reflection of his personal longings. He expressed his ideal love as "love at first sight, endure until death, and grow old together." "Similar to a high-quality tea, cultivated in mountainous regions covered in mist and harvested at its peak and meticulously roasted. A tea connoisseur selects the appropriate water and utensils and savors the tea with precision. Only then it will exude an aroma and leave a lasting flavor on the palate" (Meng, 2018). In his novels, Jin Yong portrayed the love between Duan Yu and Wang Yuyan as a slow and steady stream, with a lingering fragrance that he longed for. Duan Yu was a gentle and handsome prince from Dali, while Wang Yuyan was a beautiful tea picker with delicate features and a gentle smile. Although Jin Yong changed the ending of their love story in the new revised edition of *Tian Long Ba Bu*, the portrayal of love without a definite conclusion is still valuable. It is akin to savoring tea brewed with warm water, with a mellow and lingering fragrance after careful enjoyment. This perspective is a reflection of the fundamental truth that every human possesses emotions, and all love is entangled.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.3. Exploring the Relationship Between Tea and Humanity



Cassirer's philosophical emphasis centers on the human understanding of the world and various basic forms of communication. He asserts that people and their real lives should be at the heart of philosophy and thought. (Hao, 2020) The creation of symbols by humans absorbs traditional culture, which in turn influences people. The cultural characteristics of tea, rooted in the social, historical, and cultural context of indigenous people, imbue the Chinese with qualities such as magnanimity and breadth of mind. Sima Qian's statement in his "Letter to Ren An" highlighted the importance of understanding the changes of the past and present in comprehending the relationship between nature and humanity. Thus, this paper explores the complex relationship between tea culture and humanity, building upon the humanistic spirit put forth by Lu Yu during the Tang Dynasty to "act cautiously and be diligent." He explained that the Chinese character of *The Classic of Tea* was related to "grass, or wood, or both." (Fu & Ouyang, 1983). If we look at the character of "tea," it can be seen as the fusion of a "man" and "plants", which embodies the relationship between humanity and tea. According to Jin Yong, tea has the ability to calm the mind and enhance cognitive function, making it a vital component of maintaining one's health. In his literary work *Tian Long Ba Bu*, he portrays the character Duan Yu as having a composed and steady disposition, which can be attributed to his upbringing with tea. Jin Yong's three male protagonists, Duan Yu, Xu Zhu, and Qiao Feng, embody the fundamental values of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, as well as the positive, pure, harmonious, and refined aspects of tea culture. During the "Zhaozhou International Zen and Tea Culture Exchange Conference," hosted at the Bolin Zen Temple of Zhaozhou, Hebei, Master Jinghui proclaimed that these four elements are the epitome of traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, Jin Yong's novels depict tea as not only a form of material or national culture, but also a representation of "human culture." At the ceremony where he was named an honorary professor at Peking University, Yan Jiayan, a professor, commended Jin Yong's novels, stating that they possess an unparalleled richness of traditional cultural content and exhibit exceptional cultural and academic sophistication. Jin Yong's martial arts novels, in essence, are cultural novels, and only a writer and scholar with profound cultural knowledge and boundless imagination could create such works.

#### 4. Conclusion

Throughout history, tea has been more than just a beverage. It has been a medium through which common people record behaviors and attitudes, while literati express their feelings and interests in poems, essays, arts, and music related to tea. This artistic processing of tea culture can be seen as a process of "encoding," and the "decoding" of the cultural spirit of tea and the Tao, tea and emotions, and tea and people by Jin Yong contentiously to deepen people's outlook on life.

In Jin Yong's novels, tea cultural symbols such as "space," "martial power," "concepts," and "etiquette" have been given meaning, allowing for the depiction of exciting fighting scenes and the shaping of characters with different personalities. They also reproduce the etiquette of the orthodox sects in Jianghu and the court. The combination of tea, human character, art, Jianghu, chivalry, and tenderness not only enriches the traditional cultural connotation of the novel but also enhances the ideological level of the work, expressing a poetic spirit.

Tea culture symbols are one of the traditional cultural symbols of China, carrying grand and profound themes and serving as a bridge connecting literary works and modern life. They provide contemporary people with unique spiritual insights and ideological appeals. Jin Yong's martial arts novels, which are popular throughout China and Hong Kong, have also been widely circulated in South Korea, Japan, and other overseas countries, deeply loved by overseas readers as reported by the Hong Kong magazine "Ming Pao Monthly" in November 2019. Literary critic Lin Yiliang commented, "Wherever there are Chinese people and Chinatowns, there are Jin Yong's martial arts novels." As Jin Yong's masterpiece spreads throughout the world, tea culture symbols

carry traditional Chinese art and culture, becoming one of the iconic symbols of Westerners' recognition of China.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The book makes several references to "tea flowers," however, based on research, it is not considered a part of tea culture and is therefore omitted from this paper.

<sup>2</sup> While *Tian Long Ba Bu* contains descriptions of Song Dynasty history, it is acknowledged that these may not align perfectly with historical facts and are not the focus of in-depth research in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> The national government of the Song Dynasty in China. The Tibetan Kingdom represents the earliest recorded political power in Tibetan history within China.

<sup>4</sup> Authored by Lu Yu during the Tang Dynasty, *The Classic of Tea* stands as the first-ever book solely dedicated to tea, serving as an encyclopedia of tea with detailed records of its history, origin, production technology, tea drinking skills, and principles of tea art. This groundbreaking treatise remains a cornerstone of tea studies.

<sup>5</sup> "Scaring People Fragrance" is "Biluochun," a green tea variety, represents one of China's top ten famous teas with over 1,000 years of history as a traditional and renowned tea.

<sup>6</sup> Buttered tea, a tea beverage enjoyed by the Tibetan people, is made by blending strong tea with butter.

<sup>7</sup> Princess Wencheng, a member of the imperial clan in the Tang Dynasty, married into the Tibetan Kingdom in 641 AD and became Queen to Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. This union marked a significant alliance between the Tang Dynasty and the Tibetan Empire.

<sup>8</sup> Jin Yong, a pen name for the writer whose real name is Louis Cha, shares the same pronunciation as the Chinese word for tea.

<sup>9</sup> In 1966, Chinese litterateur Mr. Chen Shixiang commented on *Tian Long Ba Bu*, highlighting the unpredictable nature of fate and the emotional turmoil that life can bring.

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