THE ORIGIN OF OOLONG TEA

[Author's name]
Yokichi Matsui

[Institution and address]
Beverage Development Department, Beverage & Food Division, Suntory Limited
Products Development Center 57, Imaikami-cho , Nakahara-ku, Kawasaki city,
Kanagawa prefecture, 211-0067 Japan

[Summary]
In Japan oolong tea beverage tapped new market of tea soft drinks. Therefore oolong tea of Fujian China became the center of attention, it got into the limelight. It was contend with green tea for exporting to Europe, and received a favorable review. But after the Opium War new black tea took the place of it. Oolong tea was made by semi-fermentation or partial fermentation and it has special feature that there are not in the non-fermentation and full-fermentation. The origin of it was devised as the tea of improvement from Song Luo tea. Wuyishan was known the tea source since Tang dynasty and they had offered present of tea from Song dynasty. They had the ability that could make high level tea. Many monks in Wuyishan made Song Luo tea, but the name of Jiang Xi Wu tea was made in the other region of Wuyishan got the advantage for selling to Europe. Tea was repeated a change for the better and had grown to oolong tea. It's polyphenol that tea catechins are polymerized together has the different feature from green tea and black tea. Semi-fermented tea has special effects for good health.

[Key words]
oolong tea, black tea, fermentation, catechin, oolong tea polyphenol

[Text]

1, Introduction

Now tea is one of the most drinking beverage in the world. Tea was discovered in China four or five thousand years ago and was invented to a sort of beverage in China. At first time it was used as medicine and was changed to beverage about 14 hundred years ago. Tea was repeated a change for the better. In Japan they use 140 thousand ton tea per year, about more than 100 thousand tons of green tea, 21 thousand tons of oolong tea, 16 thousand tons of black tea. The product of soft drinks in Japan tea drinks were about 5 million kilo liters (over 30 per cent in all soft drinks) in 2003. They are true No.1 soft drinks in Japan. Above all non sugar tea beverage occupies over about 85 per cent in tea beverage.

Oolong tea drinks have been in traction for the development of tea soft drinks and had

big share in the tea soft drinks after canned oolong tea beverage put on sale in 1981.

2, The history of oolong tea and future

Tea has four or five thousand year history, But tea used as beverage was about two thousand year history. At first tea was used as fete goods, next tea was used as vegetable, food stuffs, medicines and finally as beverage.

After tea was invented and improved many times in China it was introduced to Europe in the 17th century. Taste of tea have been turn out various types.

Table1 Transition of using tea

Chun Qiu(春秋)Preceding(~BC770)	fete goods
Chun Qiu(春秋)Last~Xi Han(西漢)Preceding (BC600~BC200)	vegetable food stuffs
Xi Han(西漢)Forepart~Xi Han(西漢)Last (BC200~BC100)	medicine
Xi Han(西漢)Last~San Guo(三国) (BC100~AD260)	special drink for partial nobles
Xi Jin(西晉)~Sui(隋)(260~600)	usual drink
Tang(唐)、Song(宋) 618~1271	dawn general drink for public
Yuan(元) 1271~1368	
Ming(明)(14C~17C)	using special tea pot nativity of various type tea
Qing(清)(17C~1911)	importance for export influence from England for the future of tea

In China old type of tea was boiled by steam and made tea cake. But tea was repeated improvement of flavor and taste and removed greenish flavor and made good taste.

After fermentation of tea was discovered and used to make new tea, it adopted as one of method that drew out of the faculty of tea. Now classification of tea was adopted the degree of fermentation. They have classified the three, non-fermentation is green tea, semi-fermentation is oolong tea and full-fermentation is black tea. In the 16th century tea of China began to be known to Europe, by some missionaries and some explorers which introduced the habit to drink tea or wrote travel sketches. Trading with China began since the top of 17th century, cotton fabrics mainly were traded. Tea trading was small but was increased by degrees. In the beginning of tea trading there was a lot of green tea. In the latter of the 18th century Bohea(武夷) called black tea got an advantage over green tea. But after the Opium War in the 19th century, new black tea of full-fermentation gained the advantage over Bohea. The old black tea named Bohea that was made in the Wuyishan (武夷山) of Fujian (福建) was made by semi-fermentation and won popularity. After new black tea was produced, the consumption of tea in Europe increased very much. The major source was enlarged to China, but the source of oolong tea remained in Fujian, a part of Guangdong (広東). And oolong tea has been making many characteristic tea leaves. Chinese black tea has been manufacturing by Chinese style production, for competition against product of India and Sri Lanka.

But the influence with black tea was decreased after 1990. Now Chinese black tea is moribund. Oolong tea has been increasing by the popularity in Japan. They say that oolong tea is the most promising tea in the future of the domestic market.

3, The origin of oolong tea

Now the sources of oolong tea are Fujian, a part of Guangdong and Taiwan. Main source is Fujian. It's said the cradle is Wuyishan where is the north end of Wuyi

mountain chain between Fujian and Jiangxi (江西). The sources of Fujian are devided the north side region and the south side region by the biggest river Minjiang (閩江).
Yang Xian（陽羨）, Song Luo（松羅）and Long Jing（龍井）were the center of attention in the former of the 18th century in China. The target tea to make in Fujian was Song Luo, they invited the monks who made Song Luo tea in Huangshan (黄山) of Anhoi (安徽). But tea that was able to export to Europe was Bohea (Wu Yi tea). "Cha Shuo (茶説)" of Cao Tang Wang (王草堂) said Song Luo tea and Long Jing tea were made by Chao Qing (炒青) (enzyme reduction by temperature), not made by Hong Bei (烘焙) (drying and roasting by heater). Wu Yi tea was made by both Chao Qing and Hong Bei.

About Wu Yi tea making the first flush plucking is from 20th and 21st April to 6th and 7 th May. After 20 days the next plucking starts. First flush is strong taste ‥ After plucking tea leaves withering that is spread on the bamboo knitted mat under the sunshine, makes leaves decrease green color. Song Luo tea and Long Jing tea are made by roasting but no baking. Only Wu Yi tea is made by both roasting and baking. Its color is half green and red.	武夷茶自谷雨采至立夏、謂之頭春。約隔二旬復采、謂之二春。又隔又采、謂之三春。頭春葉精味濃、二春三春葉漸細、味漸薄、且帯苦矣。夏末秋初又采一次、名為秋露、香更濃、味亦佳、但為来年計、惜之不能多采耳。茶采后竹筐均鋪、架于風日中、名曰晒青。俟其青色漸収、然后再加炒焙。陽羨介片只蒸不炒、火焙以成。松羅、龍井皆炒而不焙、故其色純、独武夷炒焙兼施、烹出之時半青半紅、青者乃炒色、紅者乃焙色、茶采而攤、攤而搖、香気発越即炒、過時不及皆不可、既炒既焙、復揀去其中老葉枝蒂、使之一色。釈超全詩云:"如梅斯馥蘭斯馨、心閑手敏工夫細。"形容殆尽矣。　　王草堂「茶説」

The monks of Buddhism and Daojiao (道教) needed tea to use in training, they became to make tea themselves and sell tea. Since tea of Wuyishan was famous to Europe, Bohea became to typified Wu Yi tea. "Pian Ke Yu Xian Ji (片刻余閑集)" of Jing Zai Liu (劉靖在) introduced Jiang Xi Wu (江西烏) that was made at the vicinity of Wuyishan and extracted liquid was black and red color. Bohea was the first fermented tea and English black tea separated from Bohea in 19th century. Wuyishan is known the tea source since Tang dynasty and they offered present of tea since Song dynasty. They had the ability that could make high level tea. Wuyishan was not the source of offering present of tea in the end of 16th century. Many people in Wuyishan made various tea and invented new type of tea. But Bohea was selected by European people. It was made by the change of green tea from boiling by steam to roasting by saucepan and the change of Wu Yi tea adding fermentation and roasting. Black tea was Wu Yi tea until the latter of the 18th century. But changed to new type tea that expanded full-fermentation tea. "Xu Cha Jing (続茶経)" written by Ting Can Lu (陸廷燦) who was governor of Chong An (崇安) province(now Wuyishan city) used souchong, flowery, pekoe(Bai Hao:白毫).that were

used by the language of black tea now.

4, The method of the process to make oolong tea and characteristic of quality

Oolong tea is between green tea and black tea. There are many various types of oolong tea from near green tea to near black tea. They are made by complicated process, and don't go to mechanical production. Therefore they are not gotten equality and stability of quality. They are used exertion to make constant quality.

In the case of oolong tea making there are semi-fermentation processes. At first tea leaves plucking, the second is withering under the sunshine (Sai Qing 晒青) that activate hydrolyzed enzyme and oxidized enzyme, the third is cooling down temperature of tea leaves (Liang Qing 涼青), the fourth is stirring leaves for making flowery flavor by hydrolyzed enzyme (Yao Qing 摇青) that makes main flavors and is made by the sharp sense of tea makers.(Kan Qing Zuo Qing 看青作青) The fifth is heating process that after much flavor coming out many parts of enzymes are reduced. Subsisted enzymes make fermentation slowly. The sixth is rolling that cell membrane is crushed by physical power and peculiar taste is made by oxidized enzyme. The last is drying process that puts a period to fermentation. Oolong tea has complicated process and is made complicated flavor and taste by the sense and feeling of making persons. The peculiar taste of oolong tea is made by semi-fermentation that tea catechin is oxidized and connected. Green tea includes catechin that taste bitter but oolong tea has mild and deep taste that tea catechin changes to oolong tea polyphenol. It makes peculiar taste of oolong tea mild, heavy and strong.

5, The healthy functions of oolong tea

Oolong tea was introduced into Japan as diet tea in the 1970's. They began to research physiological functions of oolong tea with the enlargement of consumption in the 1980's. Now various healthy functions of oolong tea are made clear, many research workers have been making clear the legend of tea. There are many functions of preventing from fatness, restraint escalation of blood pressure, improvement of neuter fat and cholesterol, restraint of cancer, making beautiful skin and prevention from aged for skin, improvement allergy, relation from stress, improvement of life cycle, preventing from dental caries and so on. In the classification of physiological effects of oolong tea there are anti-oxidation by oolong tea polyphenol, suffocation or promotion of enzyme action in the living body and absorption of substances. They are said that oolong tea polyphenol plays an important role to many effects for our health. The merits of drinking oolong tea are that consumers drink it pleasantly every day and get more healthy condition.