

Strategies for Promoting Ethnic Unity through Hubei Border Tea

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Abstract Based on a questionnaire survey and on-site research on the overview of the border tea industry, the importance of the development of border tea for ethnic unity work is analyzed, and improvement suggestions and implementation strategies are proposed.

Key words Border tea, Nationality, Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles

1 Introduction

Border tea is mainly sold in border ethnic minority areas, and it mainly divided into Fu brick, black brick, flower brick of Hunan (mainly sold in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu and other places), green brick, rice brick of Hubei (mainly sold in Inner Mongolia), Kang brick, Jinjian of Sichuan (mainly sold in Tibet, Qinghai), black tea of Guizhou (mainly sold in Xinjiang, Tibet), compressed tea of Yunnan (some sold in Tibet) by category. Black tea is the main one, and Fu brick of Hunan and green brick of Hubei have the largest production and sales volume. Border tea is a special ethnic trade commodity with strong policy and ethnic characteristics. In addition to meeting the living needs of ethnic minority areas in the border, it also fully reflects the policy support provided by the party and government to strengthen ethnic unity, consolidate border security, and promote socialist construction. The trade of border tea has significant significance in the historical process of the formation of the Chinese national community. Around the production, processing, transportation, and sales of border tea, various ethnic groups have jointly participated, cooperated, and shared benefits, forming the largest commercial and trade activity in Chinese and even world history, driving the economic and social development of border areas and the mainland, and greatly promoting the exchange, communication, and integration of various ethnic groups^[1]. At present, the academic community focuses on theoretical research on the concept, connotation, and consciousness casting of the Chinese national community^[2–5]. Some scholars have conducted the practical exploration and case studies of strengthening the awareness of the Chinese national community^[6–9], but few studies have linked industrial development with strengthening the awareness of the Chinese national

community and explored the path of industrial development. This article starts with the analysis of the logical relationship between the development of Hubei border tea industry and the strengthening of the consciousness of the Chinese national community. Through questionnaire surveys, on-site visits, and other methods, it focuses on investigating 16 designated production enterprises of national ethnic special commodity tea during the "13th Five-Year Plan" period in Hubei Province and the historical development and current situation of the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles. It analyzes the current situation and problems of the development of Hubei border tea industry, and explores strategies for promoting ethnic unity through Hubei border tea.

2 Overview of Hubei border tea industry

Hubei has a long history of producing tea and is a major tea producing area in history. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was one of the three major ports for tea export in China. As a major tea producing province in China, Hubei has unique conditions for tea production, ranking among the top five in terms of tea plantation area, yield, and output value. It is one of the six major tea producing provinces in China. It has formed famous tea brands such as Enshi Yulu, Yihong Tea, and Qingzhuan Tea, among which Qingzhuan Tea is widely known as the main category of border tea. In 2022, Zhao Liqiao's brick tea making skills were successfully selected for the *Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*.

The main production area of green brick tea is located in southern and southwestern Hubei, with Chibi as the core. It is one of the three major agricultural characteristic industries in Chibi City. Through a survey of 16 designated production enterprises for border tea in Hubei Province, it was found that Xianning City has been the production center for border tea in Hubei from history to the present, with green brick tea as the production center. In the 2022 China Top 100 Tea Industry Counties Ranking, Chibi City and Xian'an District separately ranked 19th and 73rd. Yangloudong Tea Industry and Chibi Tea Development Group were awarded the "2022 Top 100 Tea Industry Enterprises". There are 308 national level advantage zones of characteristic agricultural products, with

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only 31 advantage zones of tea products in China. Among them, the tea industry in Xianning City has the advantage zone of Chinese characteristic agricultural products in the green brick tea industry in Chibi City. Hubei Chibi Yangloudong brick tea culture system is an important agricultural cultural heritage in China. Yangloudong Village, Zhaoliqiao Town, Chibi City, is known as the source of Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles in Asia and Europe and the hometown of brick tea. In 2010, it was awarded the fifth batch of honorary titles of "Famous Historical and Cultural Villages in China" by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development and the National State Cultural Relics Bureau. Xianning City is one of the important starting points for the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles, a linear cultural heritage site. The only "Chinese time-honored" tea enterprise in Hubei, Zhaoliqiao Tea Factory, has an annual comprehensive output value of 800 million yuan. Its main product, character "川" green brick tea, has become Hubei's "new business card" on the world stage.

3 Contribution of Hubei border tea to promoting ethnic unity in the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles

3.1 Promoting economic development and political stability of various ethnic groups Accompanied by the production, processing, transportation, sales, and consumption of border tea, the material exchange between the mainland and ethnic minorities in border areas has been strengthened, which has played a positive role in the economic development of the mainland and surrounding ethnic groups. The impact on the economic, social, and ethnic development of cities along the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles is particularly severe, and it has also promoted the formation of brick tea culture. The development of economy and trade, in turn, has promoted material enrichment, improved the living standards of the people in the mainland and surrounding areas, promoted the rise of a large number of towns, and accelerated the process of urbanization.

The political status of border tea in history is also extremely important. Border stability and ethnic unity are guarantees for the smooth development of national economy, society and other work, and are issues that have been highly valued throughout dynasties. Border tea not only lays the economic foundation for ethnic integration, but also plays a very important role in stabilizing border areas. Border tea emerged in the late Tang Dynasty and gradually became an essential daily necessities for people in ethnic minority gathering areas. Since then, tea trade has gradually developed, which promoted the exchange between ethnic minorities and the Han people to some extent, and laid an economic foundation for ethnic integration. In addition, ensuring a sufficient supply of border tea is a means for rulers to stabilize the border and appease ethnic minorities.

3.2 Promoting the exchange and integration of various ethnic groups The gradual maturity of the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles" provides an opportunity for mutual exchange between

agricultural and grassland ethnic groups. Although tea trade itself does not possess ethnic attributes, it plays a mediating role in regional integration to a certain extent. The origin of Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles is basically a multi-ethnic residential area, such as the Han and She nationalities in Mount Wuyi, the Han, Miao and Yao nationalities in Mufu Mountain, the Han, Tujia, Miao and Bai nationalities in Wuling Mountain, and the Han, Yao, Miao and Dong nationalities in Xuefeng Mountain. The tea grown and processed in these tea source areas is transported to the north through the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles, meeting the needs of various ethnic groups such as the Mongolian and Hui nationalities in the north and realizing the value of production for various ethnic groups in the south. Through tea trade, understanding and mutual assistance among various ethnic groups have been enhanced, and recognition and unity among all ethnic groups have been achieved. To some extent, the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles has become an important link to solidify the sense of the Chinese national community, and its direct effect is conducive to the formation of the concept of great unity of the Chinese nation. Up to now, the border tea produced by local trade enterprises in the southern region is still sold in large quantities to the northern and northwestern regions. Local officials from the Mongolian grasslands often bring a brick of tea to the herdsmen as a gift to show respect when visiting villages.

In the process of opening up, maintaining, and prospering the tea road, various regions and ethnic groups have cultivated the "tea road spirit" of fearlessness, courage to explore, win-win cooperation, honesty and trustworthiness. Starting from the source of tea such as Mount Wuyi, Mufu Mountain, Xuefeng Mountain, and Wuling Mountain, through humid areas in the south to semi-arid and arid areas, across mountainous compound farming cultural areas, rice farming cultural areas, dry farming cultural areas, nomadic cultural areas, *etc.*, the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles closely connects the Chinese main traditional economic and cultural regions, and extends to Siberia, Central Asia, and Europe, which has achieved complementarity and mutual exchange of livelihoods among various regions and ethnic groups. Grassland herders creatively combined tea and milk to cook tea drinks suitable for them, thereby promoting the widespread dissemination of tea in grassland areas. With the deepening of communication, Han traders who migrated can also quickly accept the dietary customs of the Mongolian grasslands. This confirms that the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles" directly and objectively promotes the integration of customs between the Mongolian grassland ethnic group and the Central Plains agricultural ethnic group.

4 Strategies for promoting ethnic unity through Hubei border tea

4.1 Launching the cultural heritage and development project of border tea industry, and leading the promotion and inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture It should

launch the cultural inheritance and development project of Hubei border tea industry, systematically collect and organize tea cultural heritage and geographical indications and human factors of famous and high-quality tea, strive for national and provincial intangible cultural heritage projects, create productive protection bases for intangible cultural heritage, and promote the inheritance and development project of intangible cultural heritage.

It should strengthen the protection of famous Chinese historical and cultural villages, traditional Chinese villages such as Yangludong Village, Chinese important agricultural and cultural heritage such as Chibi Yangludong brick tea culture system, Chinese time-honored brands, and Hubei time-honored brands, strive for global important agricultural and cultural heritage, and promote the protection and utilization of famous historical and cultural cities, towns, villages, blocks, and historical buildings, the protection of traditional Chinese villages, the inheritance and protection of agricultural culture, and the protection and development of Chinese time-honored brands.

4.2 Building a border tea city in China and strengthening the community consciousness of the Chinese nation It should objectively face the market situation of the main producing areas of border tea in China, focus on supporting 16 designated production enterprises for border tea, strengthen the high-quality supply of border tea as a special commodity for ethnic minorities, and build a "connecting bridge" to promote communication and integration among various ethnic groups. Combining border tea culture, the mainland market should be improved, and the market of "Silk Road" should be open up, and China's border tea city should be comprehensively built.

It should strengthen the education of ethnic unity in Hubei's tea industry, create a demonstration zone (demonstration unit) for ethnic unity and progress, take the main focus on strengthening the awareness of the Chinese national community, and promote the high-quality development of designated production enterprises for border tea in the new era. By organizing activities such as the "Healthy Inner Mongolia Tour of Sichuan Tea", "Hubei Green Brick Tea Tasting Conference", and the "Healthy Frontier Tour" of Hubei green brick tea in Inner Mongolia and other places, the creation of ethnic unity and progress can be tangible, sensible, and effective.

4.3 Playing the role of the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles" as a bridge, and connecting various ethnic groups for common development It should continuously accelerate and strengthen the connectivity of urban transportation infrastructure along the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles", enhance the radiation of international arteries, expand the radiation of node cities along the line to counties, and achieve resource and cultural exchange along the line. Focusing on the integration of tea and tourism, it aims to create a unique tea culture tourism route with local characteristics. In local scenic spots, it can occasionally carry out characteristic activities with the theme of the Tea Road of

Ten Thousand Miles, showcase tea culture such as the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles" and local tea culture stories in this area, develop cultural and tourism towns, and create a three-dimensional network development model of "point-line-plane", and strengthen the mediating role of tea for the communication and integration of various ethnic groups in the north and south.

It should strengthen scientific research and comprehensive development of the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles", cross-border integration of various industries, cultural and tourism development. It could encourage the creation of high-quality tourism routes, and attract mass tourism, such as "revisiting the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles". The integration of "three teas" could be comprehensively promoted, and the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles brand could be shaped. It should do a good job in promoting the "Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles", strengthen publicity efforts, expand publicity channels, adopt a government led and enterprise participation approach, continuously strengthen the publicity of border tea public brands in Inner Mongolia, understand the historical and cultural origins and main functions, and enhance cultural identity.

4.4 Using border tea as a medium, and strengthening national unity and emotional integration practice It should widely carry out ethnic unity work, promote the cultivation of the Chinese national community consciousness, and ensure that ethnic unity takes root. Using the medium of "sending border", it could carry out various activities such as policy promotion, medical treatment, technology promotion, training, recruitment, and cultural performances. It should actively coordinate and promote the construction of rural infrastructure, help the people solve difficulties in various aspects of production and life such as education, employment, medical care, income increase, and poverty alleviation, and carry out the "National Unity, One Family" activity to promote communication, exchange, and integration among all ethnic groups.

It should promote deep poverty alleviation, carry out grassroots education support, promote border tea culture, and build an embedded living pattern, to enable members of various ethnic groups to better learn and exchange, enhance understanding, break barriers, eliminate narrow exclusivity, understand each other's customs and habits, improve the national language proficiency of ethnic minorities, enhance the sense of the Chinese national community, and do a good job in ethnic unity work.

4.5 Refining the spirit of cultivating people through border tea culture, and promoting the exchange, communication and integration of various ethnic groups in the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles

The production, processing, transportation, and sales of border tea not only leads to the birth of the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles, but also derives the essence of border tea culture, such as the spirit of striving to face difficulties and forge ahead; the entrepreneurial character of exploring new territories and facing chal-

lenges; the business principle of being polite, honest, and trustworthy; the inclusive spirit of coexistence and mutual benefit cooperation; and the platform concept of continuously deepening regional cooperation in economy, trade, culture, and tourism, driving innovation and cultural exchange. By introducing tea culture into the promotion of border tea, it can guide people of all ethnic groups to form correct ideological concepts and achieve the goal of humanistic literacy education. The integration of tea culture into the humanistic literacy education of various ethnic groups has enhanced cultural confidence, laid the foundation for cultivating high-quality talents with comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor, and promoted the exchange, communication and integration of various ethnic groups in the Tea Road of Ten Thousand Miles.

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