**Food Atlas: Food Atlas Entry**

Clarice Hoe Sue Yeen

Department of Psychology, University of New Brunswick

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Dr. Daniel Tubb

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Puer tea has the potential to create and destroy social bonds in a community. Tea is popular among many throughout the world. This is no different for those living in China, whereby they have a variety of tea selection to choose from. Puer tea, in particular, is famous among many in the Southern parts of China, specifically in Yunnan and Guangdong, China. Puer tea is categorized as a black tea. But many Puer tea advocates have called for it to be an independent category. Depending on the fermentation process, Puer tea can be categorized into three types: (1) raw Puer tea (nonfermented), (2) aged raw Puer tea (naturally fermented), and (3) “ripe” Puer tea (artificially fermented). Raw Puer tea is made using large-leaf tea leaves which have not gone through any postfermentation process, producing an astringent flavour. This type of Puer tea can either be compressed into a cake, bowl, or melon form or be left in its loose form (Zhang, 2014). Aged Puer tea is Puer tea that has been kept in storage to undergo fermentation (typically oxidation reaction) for a minimum of five years (Zhang, 2014). The older the tea, the higher its value (Zhang, 2014). The flavour of the Puer in this category is milder compared to raw Puer tea. “Ripe” Puer tea uses a different method (invented in Kunming in 1973) to mellow the acidity and bitterness of raw Puer tea. By subjecting the unfinished tea stage to a specific temperature and humidity level, postfermentation (typically through enzymatic reaction) is completed within two to three months (Zhang, 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising to see Puer tea advocates in the early years of its popularity argue about which type of Puer tea is superior based on their taste preference. These arguments would be conducted in tea houses, attendees would sit with other individuals interested in the conversation revolving around Puer tea. A type of puer tea would be served to the attendees using a Gongfu tea technique, and people would share their opinion after tasting the tea. Interestingly, instead of focusing on the tea itself and sharing their opinions, many found themselves fixated on trying not to offend the host regarding their Puer tea choice. Some who had similar taste preference to the host were very happy and managed to get to know each other better. One thing that everyone in the tea tasting event agreed on was the method of infusing Puer tea. The method used to infuse the tea in the event was through the Gongfu tea technique, a technique which originated in the Chaoshan area of southern China. The term gongfu means “preparing with care” or “skill that comes with practice” (Towler, 2010). In modern day Southern China, citizens have modernized the Gongfu tea ceremony and made it into a daily ritual of serving and drinking Puer tea with other community members. Based on the group’s preference of the Puer tea flavour, they can choose the Puer tea that meets their preference, and using the modernized Gongfu tea technique, they can strengthen their bonds with one another through the act of drinking (Puer) tea.