

## On the Origin, Development, and Publication of Tu Benjun's *Ming ji* in the Wanli Era

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### Abstract

Tu Benjun 屠本峻 (1542-1622) is well known in the history of Chinese tea connoisseurs through his treatise *Ming ji* 茗笈. The present paper investigates the history of its origin, development and publication through the prefaces and postscripts of the extant copies produced in the Wanli era. The treatise emerged from the circle of *literati* of Yin county 鄞縣, Zhejiang province, and developed into three stages. Tu composed the first draft of it in appreciation of exquisite tea with a group of friends. Later, he saw several books on tea at the house of his friend Wen Long 聞龍 (1551-1631) and revised his *Ming ji*. In the 37<sup>th</sup> year of Wanli era, Luo Lin 羅廩 (1553-?) asked Tu to write a preface to his *Cha jie* 茶解 (Connoisseurship of tea), and by learning something from Luo's text Tu once again revised his *Ming ji*.

By imitating the form of “a list of previous famous Confucian authors” which included references to the literary works of those scholars in the historical works with commentaries prepared for degree examinations *ke ju* 科舉 as his model, Tu made “a list of tea experts with their major tea works.” He also cited the *Treatise on Tea* (*Cha jing* 茶經) by Lu Yu 陸羽 (733-804) as the “canon” (*jing* 經), and added quotations from later authors' tea works as “commentaries” (*zhaung* 傳) to it, even when the quotations were not directly related to Lu Yu's text. This style rendered the contents of the *Ming ji* somewhat chaotic, but established a clear structure with quotations. In fact, Tu made several errors on the title of treatises cited by him, particularly Xiong Mingyu's 熊明遇 (1579-1649) “Luoxie cha shu 囉嶰茶疏,” and these errors confirm that *Ming ji* was not a treatise with detailed and full quotations on tea. Because Tu did not mention Luo Lin in his preface to his *Ming ji*, in the second edition of the *Cha jie*, Luo removed the preface by Tu from beginning and placed it after his own concluding remarks on the treatise.

**Keywords:** late Ming, Tu Benjun, *Ming ji*, Wen Long, Luo Lin, *literati* of Lin County