

Tea, Coffee and Meditation ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 We need a few more swigs.

00:00:07 Forget about the instant level, we're not even at room temperature.

00:00:15 It is certainly historically the case that the custom of drinking tea was introduced from China into Japan in association with Zen.

00:00:34 It was the Song Dynasty style of making tea, which is the powdered tea that's in with the matcha in the Japanese pronunciation.

00:00:48 That came in with the initial introduction of Zen at that same period that I was talking about in Japan in the 12th, 13th century and so forth.

00:00:59 However, China had had tea prior to that, and I don't know to what extent it was drunk in Japan.

00:01:07 I mean, everybody says it came in the Kamakura period with Zen from China.

00:01:14 But tea goes back at least as far as the Tang Dynasty.

00:01:18 But in the Tang Dynasty, they made it into bricks.

00:01:21 It's like a brick, and I guess you pull it apart like the bole, the chao bing.

00:01:30 They're very expensive.

00:01:33 They come from, actually not too far from where Philip's ancestors come from, in South China.

00:01:40 I've had those, and somebody will tell you that this is like \$2,000 in bole, brick tea.

00:01:52 But then later on in the Ming Dynasty, they started to steep the leaves, and that's called sencha.

00:02:03 That was introduced into Japan also by a school of Zen, the Obaku school of Zen, that came in at the transition between the Ming and Qing Dynasties,

00:02:13 the early Tokugawa period.

00:02:15 So there's been like three different ways that tea was made, brick, powdered, and then just leaf, which is the modern way.

00:02:25 And two of those ways were introduced by different streams of Zen that came into Japan.

00:02:39 There's no problem with the stimulant if the choice is the Zen lurch and the keisaku beating.

00:02:47 So the alternative is, well, a little stimulant.

00:02:56 Now in fact, sometimes business magazines like Fast Company and whatever, they do stories on Green Mountain Mindfulness program,

00:03:08 my program, and the slant they always use is, isn't this weird? A coffee company is teaching tranquility, how strange is that kind of thing?

00:03:17 When I think of meditation, yeah, there's a tranquility component, but there's also a clarity alertness component.

00:03:26 And then some people get jangly if they drink stimulants, so of course that's not good in that case.

00:03:34 But that doesn't seem to happen to me, so it works out.

00:03:44 I've never closely researched the history, but I've heard sort of anecdotally that coffee fulfilled the same role in the Islamic Sufi meditative tradition

00:03:58 as the matcha did for the Zen, but I'd have to look that up and see if that's really true.

00:04:05 Okay, let's do it.