

Searching for

The Ancient Tea Horse Road

Sian Yan Yun

先燕雲 撰文

Translated and Edited / 編譯

by Aaron Fisher & Aaron Davis

尋找茶馬古道



國家圖書館出版品預行編目資料

尋找茶馬古道 = Searching for the Ancient Tea Horse Road

先燕雲撰文. --第一版

--臺北市：五行圖書，2008.05

--面：19 CM × 26 CM

ISBN 978-957-8964-46-4 (精裝)

1. 人文地理 2. 自然地理 3. 雲南省

673.54

97009120

尋找茶馬古道 Searching for the Ancient Tea Horse Road

出版者：五行圖書出版有限公司 /

Publication : Wushing Books Publication Co., Ltd.

發行人：張淑貞 / Publisher : Shu-Jen Chang

作者：先燕雲 / Copyright Owner : Sian Yan Yun

攝影：高志強 / Photo : Gao Jih Ciang

集團編輯長：梁俊智 / CEO & Chief Editor : Liang Chun Chih

總編輯：羅英銀 / Executive Editor : Luo Ying Yin

編譯：Aaron Fisher & Aaron Davis / Translated and Edited : Aaron Fisher & Aaron Davis

執行編輯：蘇映純、A. D. Fisher、鄭翔如、陳俞君、許尚筆

Editor : Su Ying Chun、A. D. Fisher、Jheng Shiang Ru、Chen Yu Jun、Hsu Shang Pi

美術編輯：潘俞君、廖東亮、曾珮宜、何瑞雯

Graphic Designers : Pan Yu Jun、Liao Dong Liang、Zeng Pei Yi、He Ruei Wun

版面構成：多姿彩創意設計公司 /

Layout & Graphics : Colorful Creating Design Co., Ltd.

地址：台北市大同區酒泉街66號4樓之1

Address : 4F-1, No.66, Jioucyuan St., Datong District, Taipei City 103, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

TEL : 886-2-25960486

FAX : 886-2-25857658

業務部：886-2-29871686 / Sale Dept. : 886-2-29871686

讀者服務部：886-2-29808068 / Reader Services Dept. : 886-2-29808068

劃撥帳號：17343712 / Postal Transfer No. : 17343712

郵政信箱：台北郵政47-74號信箱 / P.O. Box : P.O. Box 47-74 Taipei City 10399 Taiwan (R.O.C.)

E-MAIL : ceramart@ms27.hinet.net

印刷製版：恆久彩色印刷製版有限公司 / Printing : Forever Color Painting & Plate-making Co., Ltd.

定價 / Price : NT\$1200、HK\$290、RMB\$300、US\$39.99、CAD\$39.99、EUR\$25.99

《版權聲明》

本書文字及圖片均取得合法著作權保護，凡涉及私人運用以外之營利行為，
須先取得本公司及作者同意，未經同意翻印、複製、剽竊或盜版之行為必定依法追究。

法律顧問 / 宇國聯合律師事務所 張智剛律師

[Copyright Announcement]

All rights reserved. No part of this book can be reproduced,
transmitted in any form without permission from the writer and the publisher.

Legal Advisor: / Yu-Kuo Associated Law Firm Attorney: Mark C.K. Chang

本書如有裝訂錯誤破損缺頁請寄回退換 / If you found any binging mistakes, or lost pages, please resend to us.

西元2008年5月出版 第一版第一刷 / 2008 May. The first edition and the first printing

Searching for

The Ancient Tea Horse Road

尋找

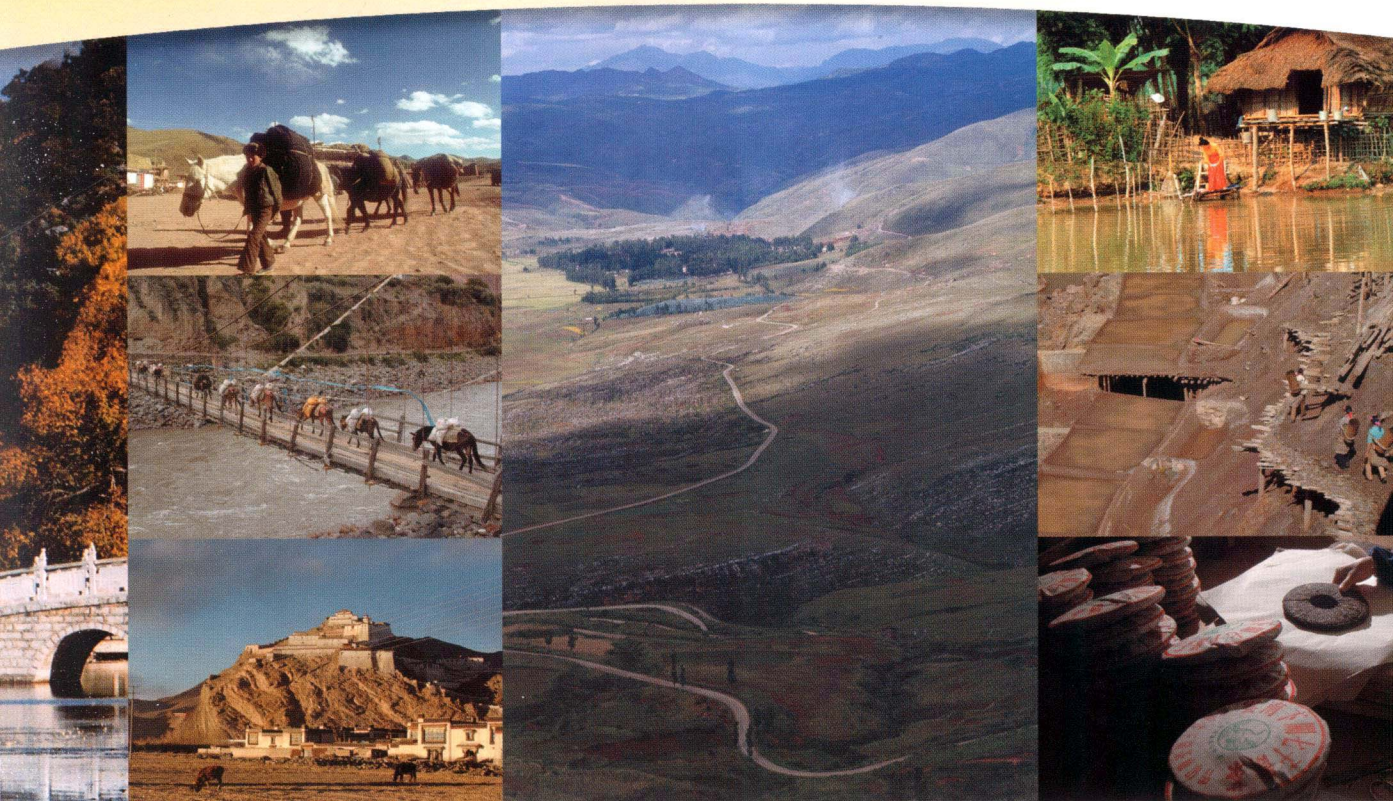
茶馬古道



目錄 CONTENTS



引 言	004	第五章 來到了茶的原生地	138
第一章 古道從大理起步	018	南方有嘉木	
老茶廠、三道茶、驛馬市		界碑旁的打洛	
喜洲本主與喜洲商幫		茶王樹、布朗酸茶、老榨機	
品味洋人街		「嘎湯帕」	
松桂鎮老馬店		月圓之夜	
第二章 古商城麗江	044	北回歸線上最後的綠洲	
商鎮史話		易武小鎮	
四方街訪舊		綠色基諾山	
茶商和馬鍋頭的往事		普洱茶得名的地方	
束河		走在官馬大道上	
外國攝影家與納西古樂		第六章 茶馬古道今猶在	180
霧行維西道		鳥道和馬店	
小教堂和老寺廟		梯田間的集市	
虎跳峽的今日馬幫		忽必烈大軍的後代	
第三章 走進迪慶高原	082	古城昆明，難尋當年老茶館	
高原草甸的茶馬會		無量山中後路行	
酥油茶和飲茶史		寂靜清涼街	
歸化寺的喇嘛馬幫		回輝登	
馬幫故事上了奔子欄藏家的壁畫		南詔發祥地巍山	
孤獨的高原古道		夕陽下的古鎮	
升平鎮與梅裏雪山		附 編 古道絮語	220
第四章 雪域三大角尋蹤	116		
帶血的故事			
高原雪城			



Introduction 004

- Chapter 1 The Ancient Road Begins in Dali 018**
 Old tea factory, three-course tea, and the horse market
 Xizhou and the merchants of Xizhou
 Experiencing "Westerner Street"
 Songgui village and the horse caravan inn

- Chapter 2 The Ancient Trading Post of Lijiang 044**
 Tales from the trading village
 Visiting the Old Market Square
 Tea merchants and caravan leaders
 Shu He
 The foreign cameraman and traditional Naxi music
 Traveling through the fog to Weixi
 The small church and the old temple
 Modern-day horse caravans of Tiger Leaping Gorge

- Chapter 3 Entering the Diqing High Plateau 082**
 Tea and horse festival on the high grasslands
 Yak butter tea and tea drinking culture
 Horse caravan Lamas of Guihua temple
 Story of the horse caravans on Benzilan
 Tibetan murals
 Lonely ancient road along the plateau
 Shengping village and Meili Snow Mountain

Chapter 4 Searching for Footprints in the Snowy Triangle 116

A gruesome tale
 Snowy city on the high plateau

Chapter 5 Arrival at the Birthplace of Tea 138

A fine tree grows in the South
 Daluo: beside the boundary marker
 King of the Tea trees, Bulang sour tea, and an artisan pressing tool "Gatangpa"
 Night of the full moon
 Last oasis on the Tropic of Cancer
 Small town of Yiwu
 Green Jinuo Mountain
 Where Puerh tea gets its name
 Traveling the official horse road

Chapter 6 Ancient Tea-Horse Road Still Exists Today 180

Precipitous path and the caravan inns
 Country market amidst the rice terraces
 Descendants of Kublai Khan's army
 In the ancient city of Kunming, it's not easy to find an old teahouse
 Traveling the back roads of Wuliang Mountain
 Quiet Qingliang Street
 Huihuideng and the Muslim caravans
 Weishan, birthplace of the Nanzhao kingdom
 Sunset over the ancient town

Epilogue Tales along the Ancient Road 220

引言 Introduction





茶馬道是那樣不經意地飄入我的眼中。

指著瀾滄江對岸那座直插雲天的山峰，一位面如刀刻的老者提到了它。它那麼細，遊絲般浮在天際，彷彿風一吹就會飄散。我琢磨著它的名字「茶馬古道」，心中「咯？」一聲。

一次，又一次，那以後在雲南崇山峻嶺間的每一次出行，都遇到它的蛛絲馬跡，它不願被人遺忘。

一粒種子播進一片土地，生根、發芽，或許是天經地義的事情。不過，如果沒有後面的一次又一次，沒有我和同伴們的執著與深情，它或許還是一個夢，只在靜夜的冥思中穿行。這樣的夢在我們一生中還少嗎？

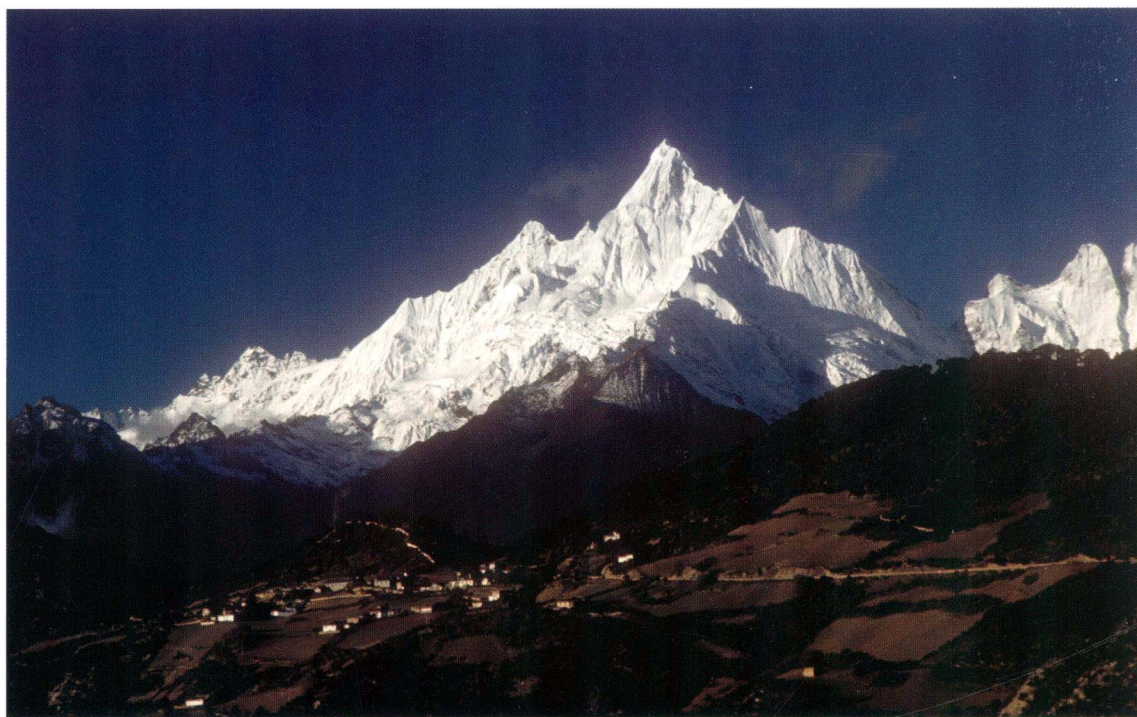
瀾滄江峽谷夠險峻，金沙江兩岸夠雄偉，幾番領略過後，有了種萬水千山只等閒的豪情。真正讓人一口氣上不來，把心懸在半空落不了地的，莫過於峽谷間橫掛江流的溜索。見過鐵索、鋼索，也見過藤條索，木溜邦一扣，「嗖」地人就懸在滾滾洪濤之上。一位膽大也

愛冒險的朋友在納古渡口也想去試試，讓我拉住未能如願。幾個試過怒江溜索的朋友互相打趣，這個說那個嚇得尿了褲，那個說這個閉著眼全然如一隻木雞。可趕馬人告訴我，當年的馬幫過這樣的溜索，連人帶馬還有一駄駄的貨，可以說是家常便飯。

噢，當年的馬幫，走的就是茶馬道。這是一條什麼樣的道呀。

出門步步難，最難莫過路途遠。有了汽車、火車、飛機，別說周遊列國，走世界也只是個金錢和機遇的問題。可雲南的路，低的海拔幾十公尺，熱浪重重雨霧濛濛，綠色包圍讓人膩得發噁心。高的四五千公尺，冰封雪裹空氣稀薄，山野光禿禿如同赤裸的外星球。這樣的地域走來走去，誰沒幾次驚心動魄的故事可講。可我的兄長告訴我，那次身陷寧蒗山間峽谷已近絕望的時刻，他看到了趕馬人留在山洞的遺骨，看到了來自異域各種錢幣。

長眼的趕馬人，走的就是茶馬道。這是一



The Ancient Tea Horse Road drifted uninvited into my field of vision.

Pointing to the high mountain peaks on the opposite side of the Lancang River, a grizzled old man mentioned it to me. Such a narrow path; it was hanging on the horizon like a gossamer thread that could be blown away by a simple gust of wind. I pondered its name in wonder: "The Ancient Tea Horse Road."

As I later traveled the steep mountains of Yunnan, I came across traces of it again and again. This ancient road does not wish to be forgotten.

A seed had been planted in my mind, then sprouted and took root. This is a very natural occurrence for me, but if not for these repeated encounters, my companions and I may not have been so persistent or passionate about our journey. Perhaps it would otherwise still just be a dream, only traveled in the silence of night. Is this type of dream a rare occurrence in our lives?

The Lancang and Jinsha rivers are lined with steep canyons and spectacular scenery, but after several visits one begins to develop a casual confidence. In terms of raw, heart-pounding excitement, however, few things can match the experience of sliding across these river gorges suspended from an overhead cable. I've seen rope lines made of iron, steel, even those made from bamboo. Snapped into a bamboo rope, with a "whoosh," one is suddenly suspended above the rushing river rapids. An adventure-loving friend of mine wanted to try this at Nagu crossing, but I held him back. Several friends who had tried the sliding rope cables exchanged war stories: one was so scared he wet his pants; another couldn't open his eyes until safely on

the other side. For those bygone horse caravans, however, traveling across these suspension ropes was a routine part of their lives. Not only did the people have to get across, they also had to carry the horses and all of the merchandise they were transporting. These horse caravans of the past were traveling the Ancient Tea Horse Road. "What kind of road was this?" I wondered again and again.

Every step of a journey is difficult, but nothing is more difficult than a long journey. With the advent of cars, trains and airplanes, traveling throughout the country—or even the world—is nothing more than a question of money and opportunity. The roads of Yunnan, though, at their lowest are only several dozen meters above sea-level and filled with oppressive tropical heat and humidity. At their highest, they reach an elevation of four to five thousand meters, traversing vast frozen mountain landscapes as empty as an extra-terrestrial planet. Traveling back and forth over these roads, it's hard not to accumulate a few hair-raising stories. It's also easy to see how we can take such long journeys for granted in these modern times.

On the last day in January, 1993, I was on a plane to the border city of Mangshi, located in the extreme southwest corner of Yunnan. I was traveling to meet the production team of "High Plateau Women." They had already set out for the Nujiang region to finish that extremely arduous three year shoot.

For some unknown reason, the plane veered off its southwest trajectory. Suddenly, I was staring down at a spectacular vista of northwest Yunnan, with its endless line of snow-capped mountain peaks. Looking at that snowy world, my vision

條什麼樣的路呀？

西元一九九三年一月的最後一天，乘飛機趕往西南角的邊城芒市，會合先期出發到怒江拍片的「高原女人」攝製組，完成那部歷時三年艱苦拍攝的任務。

不知是什麼原因，飛機向西南方飛的航程中，突然將滇西北方的特殊景致，一座連一座的雪峰送到我的眼中。噢，雪域世界，我的眼睛突然模糊了，一年半前在那片土地經歷過的種種故事，一樁樁一件件湧上心頭。我有了種幻覺，我的飛機將飛到那裏，而不是去那個花紅草綠，蔗林鋪滿山崗，店鋪裏擺滿玉石的地方。

就在這時，我知道了，我將再次走近雪山峽谷，沿一條線走近它。雖說我還不能準確地說出這條線將如何行走，但我知道它的名字：「茶馬道。」

乍暖還寒的三月，朋友冬瓜打電話約我，讓我見一位香港來的攝影師。我不想一大早在茶樓裏喝早茶，才從邊疆回來，貧困與富裕、純真與虛實的反差太過強烈，我有了一些頗為偏激的毛病，於是我拒絕了。

幾年後再談起這次本該提前的相識，我啞然，找臺階地說道：緣份未到。天意讓我們那次不見面。

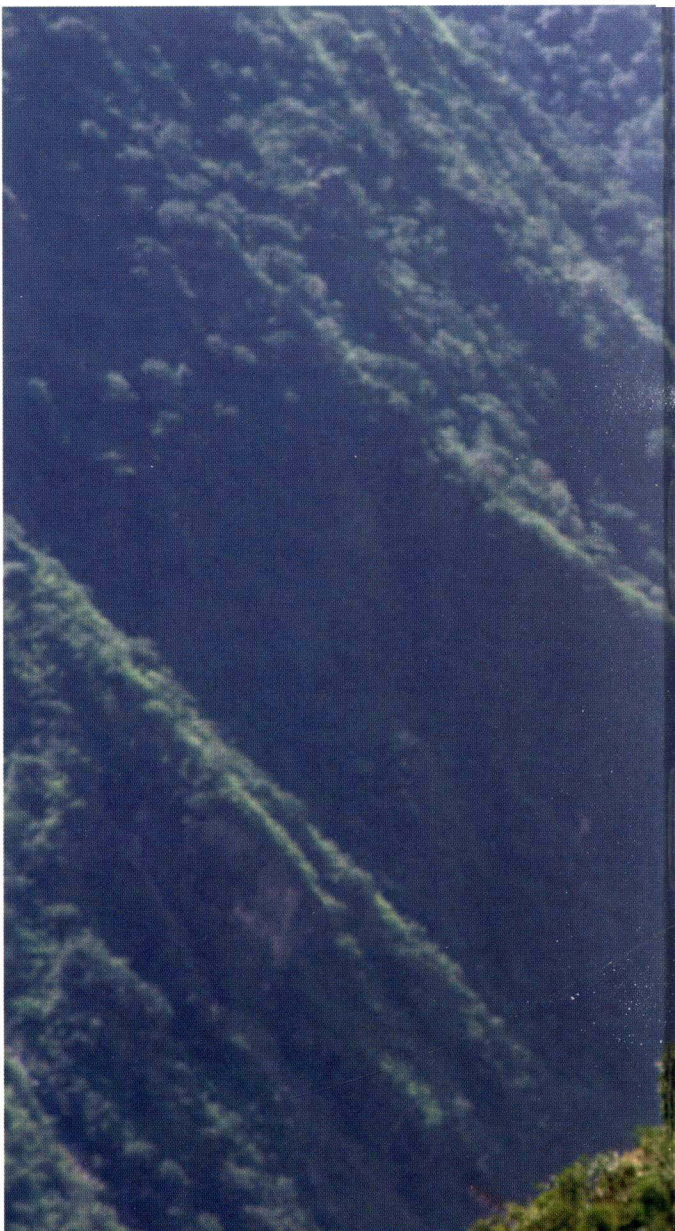
是嗎？天意還是人意，讓我們一同進入茶馬古道。

那段時間頻繁和冬瓜談天，茶馬道成了一個中心話題。此前已經有先行者的足跡，幾年年輕學者，已將滇川藏大三角的雪域之門打開，我看到他們的文章和照片。那在雪山腳下綠草地上搭起的帳篷，點燃的篝火，也映亮了我的眼睛。

冬瓜用他那永遠不會激動的嗓音說到高志強也有心參加茶馬道之行，當然，他除了拍

照，還可以用他的名聲和實力為我們拉來一家外國軟片公司的贊助。這時我想起了那個沒見過面的帥哥，不就叫高志強嗎？

接下來的事情變得具體起來，人員好說，有真性情，敢於吃苦，又拍得出好照片的哥兒們，都可以成為同行者，關鍵的是錢。沒錢寸步難行，這句話近年來體會可謂越來越深。我們盤過來算過去，能出錢的應該很多，但願出錢的大概很少。有錢的人越來越看重的是名聲與回報，我們能有怎樣的承諾呢？總不能將出錢者的大名刻在古道上吧。那是地老天荒的所



became blurred and all of the experiences I had there a year and a half earlier welled up in my mind. I began to fantasize that this was our destination, rather than the southerly, tropical place with green tree-covered hills and jade-filled markets.

At that point, I knew I would once more return to those snow-covered peaks, following a trail through the mountains. The specifics of this trail were still unclear to me, but I knew its name: "The Tea Horse Road."

In the early spring days of March, my friend

Dong Gua called me to set up a meeting with a professional photographer from Hong Kong. Having just returned from near the border, I had no desire to spend the morning drinking tea in some teahouse — the contrast between wealth and poverty, simplicity and vanity was too intense. My personality tends toward extremes, and so I declined the meeting.

Several years later when discussing that missed encounter, I was stuck at a loss for words. As an excuse, I said "Destiny hadn't yet decided to bring



在，刻上去也不會有人看到的。

冬瓜有位朋友，據說有錢，也挺有文化，我們相約見面，請他吃飯。飯桌上他一次次打手機、回電話，桌上的東西在風中變得越來越冷，我的心也越來越涼。心說這一次又是白廢功夫，那位大哥根本就沒往茶馬道上問過一個字，能出錢嗎？雖說我們精打細算，把採訪費用算得低到不能再低，可人家對這區區三萬元真就那麼不在意嗎？

果真，飯吃完了，事情也就完了。行期將近，人員已齊，沒錢沒車走哪門子古道。那段时间我的心態極其糟糕，就好像入了丐幫之門，成了個叫化子，好聽點也不過是高級叫化子。自尊心一次次被打磨，只剩下一點點毅力在堅守陣地了。

香港傳來消息，愛克發公司贊助拍攝用的

全部反轉片並承擔全部沖洗費用。諸事具備，只待昆明發話了。

我和冬瓜大眼瞪小眼之後，「行，我跑一趟玉溪！」我最終下定了決心。

到玉溪，也就是到玉溪煙廠，這個改革開放以來名聲鵲起的企業，短短十多年間躍升為全國數一數二的稅利大戶。於是乎，求助於企業的人和事可稱是應接不暇。以我的做人原則，雖說幾年前就與廠長褚時健認識，但從未開口請求過什麼。這一次，為了那條「藏在深山人不識的古道」，我終於逼迫自己開口了。五萬元，對玉溪煙廠是小數，對我們，對那條我們將要尋求的古道，卻是一筆必不可少的投入。

茶馬道太讓人陌生，茶好說馬也好說，兩者結合而成道，從何說起。



us together."

Is that true? Was it the will of God or the will of men that drove us to pursue the Ancient Tea Horse Road? I can't help but slip into such sophistry when contemplating this road, as it would form one of the major paths through my own life.

I often chatted with Dong Gua, during that period, and the Tea Horse Road was a frequent part of our conversations. A group of young researchers had already blazed a trail, traversing the snowy triangle where Yunnan, Sichuan, and Tibet converge. We read their essays and looked upon their photos—the tent erected at the grassy base of the icy mountains and the blazing campfire lighting a spark in our own eyes.

In his steady voice, Dong Gua told me that

Gao Zhiqiang was also interested in taking part in an expedition along the Tea Horse Road. In addition to helping out as a photographer, he could also use his reputation to secure funding from an international film company. I thought of that friend I had failed to meet. Wasn't his name Gao Zhiqiang as well?

The trip began to take form. Finding people to go with us was the easy part. Anyone genuinely interested, willing to undergo hardship, and able to take a good picture could join us. Money was much more of a problem. As I've come to understand very well, without money, it's difficult to travel a single step. We considered all of our options. It seemed likely that many could afford to invest in the trip, but few would actually be willing to.





茶原產於中國，並逐漸傳播到世界各地，成為世界三大飲料中需求量最大，消費面最廣的飲料。雲南是茶的原生地，可稱是茶的故鄉。

早在唐代，飲茶習俗便傳入西藏，茶成了藏胞生活中不可缺少的必需品。歷史上有以茶治邊的多項政策，銷往西藏的茶葉因此被稱為邊銷茶。

在漫長的邊茶銷售歷史中，雲南、四川等主要產地的茶葉，是以什麼方式通過、什麼渠道運往西藏的呢？史家們從點滴方誌和史料中，從歷史遺物中，從趕馬人世代傳說的故事中，認識了一條以茶馬交易為形式，以馬幫運輸為工具的古代商業通道，並稱這條從雲南西雙版納斜插滇西北高原，連結四川、西藏雪域大三角地區的蛛網狀馬幫路為茶馬古道。

我們所說的走茶馬古道，其實並不明確。對這條古道，並沒有一種完整的記載和全面的

描述。一兩千年來，古道的生命在世世代代茶商和趕馬人的行動中延續。沒有人為它樹碑立傳，因它太長太散，處處有其蹤影，卻又好似大象無形。有山有水就有人的足跡，有人的地方就有道路的傳說，茶馬道更像一個神話，一種故事，而不是實實在在的路。

我們的前行者所完成的是，雪域三角地區的古道考證，這是茶馬道最艱苦也是最傳奇的篇章。而我們想尋找它的源流，溯源而起，隨流而下，為它解開千古之謎，為它在版圖上畫一道淡淡的褐色。為此我選定了這樣的題目：尋找茶馬古道。

十月九日，終於見到了我們的車。車子的事情是冬瓜操辦的，他認識一個不久前從西藏回來的駕駛員，叫王玉傑。小夥子成了西藏迷，總尋思著有新的機遇再闖西藏。冬瓜聽說他找了一部麵包車，如此就拍板定了由小王將車開到昆明，然後又開到西藏。我們知道進藏

People with money tend to place a high value on reputation and return on investment, but what guarantee could we provide them? It's not as if we could engrave their names along the ancient road. After all, it's a vast empty wilderness. No one would ever see the names.

Dong Gua had a friend who was supposedly both wealthy and well-cultured. We made an appointment to take him out to dinner, but during the meal he was constantly on his cell phone making and answering phone call after call. As the food grew cold, I realized this was a complete waste of time. He did not ask a single question about the Tea Horse Road. What chance was there that he would invest? Although we budgeted as strictly as possible, estimating expenses as low as they could possibly go, who would be so casual about even a mere 30,000RMB (approximately \$3500 US)?

As expected, nothing came of the dinner. The date we had set for departure grew closer and the team had been assembled, but without money or a vehicle where could we go? At that point, I began to despair. It was as if I had joined a gang of beg-

gars or, at best, had become a high class beggar myself. My esteem was repeatedly compromised and all that remained was a tiny bit of determination, as the road itself seemed to slip back into the dreams from whence it came.

Then news reached us from Hong Kong that the Agfa Corporation had agreed to provide us with film and to pay all developing fees. Everything was ready to go, waiting for the go-ahead in Kunming.

Dong Gua and I had run out of options, so finally I decided I would make a trip to Yuxi. Going to Yuxi meant going to the Yuxi Tobacco Factory. The company had grown dramatically in the years following China's Reform and Opening; and, in just over ten years, had become one of the most profitable corporations in China. They clearly have to deal with a steady stream of people seeking investment. I had known the factory head Chu Shijian for several years, but as a matter of principle, had never asked him for anything. This time, though, for that "Lost ancient road in the mountain depths," I forced myself to ask him for help. To the Yuxi Tobacco Factory, 30,000RMB is a small



最好是進口越野車，那種高達三四千米的平均海拔和上百里地無人煙的艱苦路段，車輛是保障成功的最重要一環。但礙於現實，我只有認可冬瓜的選擇，心裏頭儘管七上八下。

冬瓜在樓下叫我。我開門走到陽臺上，叫著楊克林，一同往下看那輛車。從四樓往下看，就是一個白白的車頂，好像還不錯。我們對視一眼，下樓，看車、看人，同時還要到機場，接高志強和他的助手陳釗濱。

待等走近觀察，這車可就有點慘了。不知大修過幾次，漆殼變成厚厚的一層，車廂裏空空蕩蕩，就跟有些歲數的老宅一樣，怎麼看都有些淒惶。小王一張圓圓的臉，露出孩子般的笑，我將那聲歎息狠狠壓下，上了車。

高志強一出現，我就認定了是他。黑色圓領衫，黑色牛仔褲，黑色麂皮外套，一雙野外工作者最常見的高幫大皮鞋，黑黑的膚色，黑色的圓眼鏡，英氣勃勃有點歌星的感覺。看他們大包小包器材往外盤時，我第一次知道外面的攝影師有這跡麼多行頭。後來才曉得，這已經是為了進藏簡之又簡的。

握手時他摘下了眼鏡，這時我看見一雙黑色清亮的眼睛，兩排黑色濃密的睫毛。以他的職業來說，似乎秀氣了些。剎那我又想到了我們的那輛破車。

「小兵」。陳釗濱的自我介紹只有兩個字，他是那種有著強壯生命力的小夥子。他用最快速度將所有器材裝上了汽車。我有些擔憂地觀察著高志強的表情，我想知道，他會不會讓這次行動胎死腹中。

高志強見到汽車時，似乎什麼都沒想，一低頭就鑽進車門。車子就以一種超乎尋常的響動聲上了路。

我小心地試探著問，他很漢子地回答：「拍照的人，什麼都行。」事後他告訴我：

「你都不敢坐，我為什麼不敢？」他哪裡知道，在雲南當兵、當記者、當作家，馬車、牛車、拖拉機、卡車什麼沒坐過，我在一次擠的喘不過氣來時，數過北京吉普車上的人頭，密密麻麻整整有十二個。可這一次我覺得不行，這車讓我心頭髮虛。它爬碧雞關都「吭哧吭哧」喘大氣，再往下呢？冬瓜又去找朋友，答應在大理租給我們一輛昆產茶花牌旅行車。只好如此。

對於行程我們仔細地進行討論。商量的結果是將茶馬道分兩次行走，這一次從昆明經大理、麗江到中甸進藏至日喀則。下一次從西雙版納打洛起到普洱、景東、景谷、南澗、巍山、大理。四川、廣西則用相機進行採訪。

行期迫在眉睫。所有的計劃，都因人員、資金的種種牽制顯得步履蹣跚。辦妥了一切，我有種太過輕鬆的不真實感。不知不覺間，到了十月十三日出發的日子。

於是乎，出發！



sum; however, to us and to our quest to seek out the ancient road, it was absolutely essential.

The Tea Horse Road tends to confuse people. Tea is simple enough, as are horses, but put the two together on such a road, and it all becomes more difficult to explain.

Tea originated in China and gradually spread throughout the world. Among the world's three great beverages, demand for tea is the greatest. Tea originally comes from Yunnan, which can therefore be considered the birthplace of tea.

Tea drinking customs spread into Tibet long ago during the Tang dynasty. Tea became an indispensable part of Tibetan life as well. Various government policies existed throughout history using tea to control the border areas. As a result, tea earmarked for sale to Tibet was known as "Border Tea."

During the long history of Border Tea, what kind of methods and channels did the major tea producing areas such as Yunnan and Sichuan use to transport their tea to Tibet? By examining local records, historical relics, and stories passed down by the horsemen, historians have been able to piece together a picture of an ancient road based on the trade of tea using horse caravans for transport. This road traverses Yunnan diagonally from Xishuangbanna all the way to the northwestern plateau, connecting Sichuan and Tibet in a web of caravan routes. This so-called "Ancient Tea Horse Road" is not a well-defined path but rather something that developed over one to two thousand years through the activities of horsemen and tea merchants. No one had bothered to erect a memor-

ial or to write a history. It is simply too long and spread out too vastly, with traces of its existence everywhere, making it a very amorphous road. Anywhere there are mountains and bodies of water, there will be traces of human activity. Anywhere people have been, there will be legends about roads. The Tea Horse Road is more of a myth, or a type of story, than a concrete road.

The team that went before us investigated the snowy Yunnan/Sichuan/Tibetan triangle, the most arduous and legendary stretch of the ancient road. We hoped to trace the Ancient Road back to its source. We would start from the beginning, traveling the road as it unfolded, and hopefully could unravel this ancient mystery and paint a pale brown line on the map. The title of our investigation would be: "Searching for the Ancient Tea-Horse Road."

The task of securing a car was Dong Gua's. He knew a driver named Wang Yujie who had recently returned from Tibet. He had fallen in love with Tibet and was always looking for new opportunities to go. Dong Gua heard Little Wang had acquired a small minivan, so he hired him to drive it to Kunming and then on to Tibet. Roads in Tibet reach average altitudes of three to four thousand meters and involve rough stretches of nearly 100 kilometers without human habitation. In this environment, a good vehicle is the best way to guarantee success. We all knew the best choice would be an imported SUV. However, given our financial constraints, we had no choice but to accept Dong Gua's friend's offer.

On October 9th, we finally saw our vehicle. Dong Gua called up to me from downstairs. I