

In search for the origins of tea and coffee. We start in China

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The programme “**In viaggio col Mercante**” (On the road with the Merchant) is returning to VareseNews, with documentaries by **Giancarlo Samaritani**, who, with his wife **Silvia Minella** has produced a series of reportages. With these documentaries, they hope **to inform about the geographical origins of tea and coffee**, that is, of the places where these products are grown and the people associated with them. It is a series of expeditions and long trips organised by Giancarlo Samaritani who, **every week will accompany the curious viewers** to discover territories and populations on the routes of the merchants of the past.

“The first in this new series takes us to **China**, a country where time seems to flow faster than in others, after many centuries in which time had stood still,” Giancarlo explains. “We’ll be visiting the extreme southwest, the **Yunnan** region, whose name means ‘south of the clouds’, **one of the most beautiful provinces in China**, which is characterised by extremely different cultures and landscapes. The south of the province, which looks to Southeast Asia, has an almost tropical climate, whereas the north, which borders on Tibet, has an icy, high altitude climate.”

The journey will be recounted in **four episodes of 12 minutes each**, published weekly. “Yunnan forms the Chinese border with the southwest, namely **Vietnam, Laos and Burma** (Myanmar); entering this region means coming into contact with people who are descendants of the Mongolian troops of the terrible **Kublai Khan**, the grandson of the dreaded Genghis Khan. The region is also populated by many minority ethnic groups,” Samaritani continued. “You’ll see very different scenery and environments, from the snowy peaks of the north, which often exceed 4000 metres, to the tropical areas

of the south, where you can immerse yourself in the humid rainforests typical of Southeast Asia. We travelled through the narrow valley crossed by the Nujiang River, which is 2815 km in length, to retrace an ancient caravan route: **The Tea Horse Road**. Our interest was to learn about the tea and coffee farmers.”

di Translated by Samuele Del Bosco (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)