

## **History of Luxury Grocery Items and Human Civilization -From Spices to Tea, Coffee and Sugar**

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### **Summary**

As I wrote before, luxury grocery items have, despite their not being indispensable to human existence, played an important role in the history of human civilization.

For example, one of the aims of the military expedition of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC, who created a huge empire extending from the Mediterranean to West Asia, was to obtain spices such as frankincense and myrrh. Also, it was partly the desire of many Europeans to find new direct sea routes for importing spices by their own hands from the tropical regions of Asia that triggered the advent of the Age of Discovery spanning the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in which European explorers navigated the seven seas of the world.

Significant also was the role played by tea. The tea ceremony established in sixteenth century Japan provided warring lords and arms merchants with occasions for social intercourse out of harm's way and contributed to the development of an early modern social system. It was the coffee-house that first opened in London and spread to many European cities in the seventeenth century that spawned some of the ideas of modern capitalistic social institutions such as mass journalism, damage insurance and corporations.

The Boston Tea Party that touched off the War of American Independence of the eighteenth century was generated by the wrath of the American colonists against the tax imposed on tea by the government of Great Britain, their suzerain state. Moreover, the commodity that took the lion's share of the eighteenth-century international trade was sugar which was used as a condiment for coffee and tea.

Seen like this, luxury grocery items seem to have led the development of human civilization. On the other hand, the decline in the twentieth century of the tea culture in Japan and Britain may be considered to reflect a dramatic change that has occurred in the spiritual culture and human relationships of both societies.