

Tea Drinking Culture in the World

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Summary

The birthplace of tea is said to be Yunnan in the western part of China.

The custom of tea drinking started among the Chinese about 2000 years ago.

After a book on tea titled "Chajin (The Book of Tea)" was published by Lu Yu in the 8th century, tea drinking became a widespread custom as a part of Chinese culture. The influence of Chinese culture at that time was so dominant on neighboring countries that Japan accepted it, resulting in the introduction of tea during the Nard period.

However, Heian cultural developments to create a truly native culture moving away from Chinese prototypes, made the tea drinking custom die out once again. It was 400 years later in the Kamakura period when green tea based on a new processing method was imported from China, that there was a revival of the tea drinking culture in Japan. It is well known that the tea ceremony was perfected by SEN NO RIKYU in the late 16th century and tea achieved widespread popularity among the Japanese.

The tea drinking culture spread across the world in the late 17th century.

In western countries, in particular, tea drinking gained popularity very rapidly reflecting a stressful city life associated with the Industrial Revolution. As a result, the import of tea from the East caused economic friction. The world history witnessed two major wars caused by tea. One is the American Revolutionary War triggered by the Boston Tea Party. The other is the Opium War, which was caused by the British smuggling of opium to stop the outflow of silver as a means of payment for the imported tea. Later the world was divided into two civilizations: tea drinking civilization and coffee drinking civilization.

The tea drinking culture in the world varies according to the local environment. In central Asia and Hung Kong there is a cultural sphere of ball tea a mass of tea leaves. Puer tea characterized by a strong fermented flavor. Britain refined black tea culture and fostered black tea industry in India. In the northern part of Africa mint tea is most common. Oolong tea may appear to be typical Chinese tea, but it is local tea produced in the southern part of China. The mainstream Chinese tea is green tea. Though there is a wide variety of tea, tea leaves belong to a single botanical family. The differences derive from methods of processing and preparation. Among other types of tea available today green tea is drawing public attention due to its remarkable medicinal effect. It is likely that another era of green tea has dawned.