

**Lecture 35**  
**Horticulture, Politics, and World Affairs:**  
**Tea and Colonialism**



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**Tea: *Camellia* (syn. *Thea*) *sinensis*, Theaceae**

- One of the most inexpensive beverages
- Consumed as an infusion
- Arabs drink tea with mint
- English consume it with milk
- Ice tea popular in the US South
- Stimulating due to the alkaloid theobromine  
(very similar but less physiological reactive  
than caffeine from coffee)

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- Evergreen or semi-evergreen tree, 15 m tall
- Adapted between 13°– 30°N & S, subtropics  
and mountainous areas of tropics,
- Will withstand frost when dormant
- Commercial production on pruned hedges;  
bud and leaf sequentially harvested

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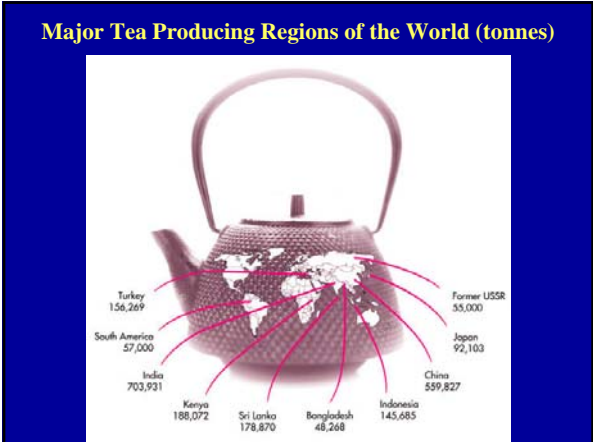
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# History of Horticulture



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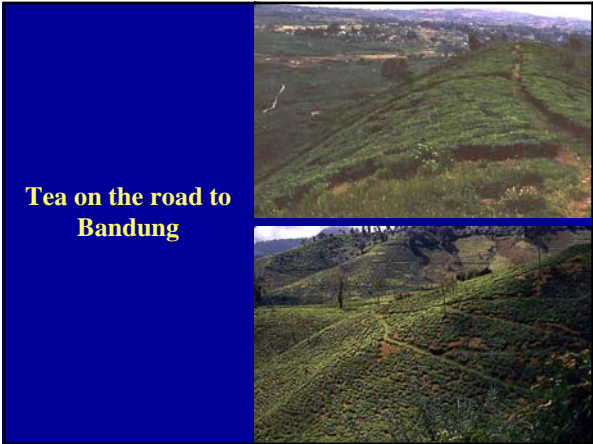
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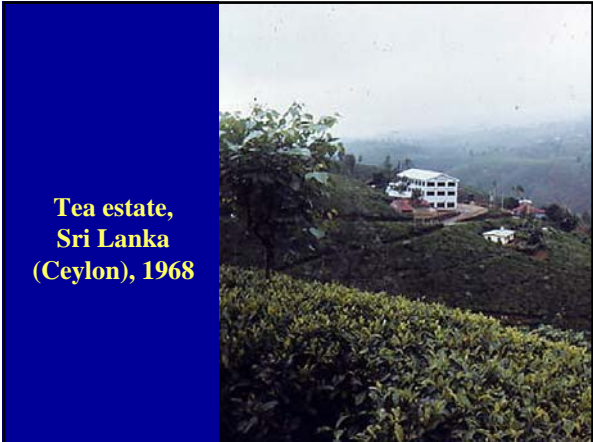
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History of Horticulture



Tea estate,  
Sri Lanka  
(Ceylon), 1968

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Tea pluckers, Sri Lanka, 1968

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Tea fields

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# History of Horticulture

## Types of Tea

Chinese (var. *sinensis*): tolerant to cold  
Assam (var. *assamica*): fast growing tall trees  
Require high temperatures  
Djarling: Hybrids between the above  
(from Djarling, India)

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## Processing

Withering and drying  
Rolling and sorting  
Fermentation  
Drying, sorting, grading, and packing

Black:  
Fermented



Green:  
Unfermented



Oolong: Partially  
fermented



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## Tea History

Long Grown in China  
Tea ceremony important in Japan  
Brought to Europe in 16<sup>th</sup> century  
Reached Eastern Europe after 1650  
(after coffee well established)  
Became general in Europe in 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Replace coffee in Britain who spread the  
habit to Empire

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# History of Horticulture

A woman wearing kimono performs a tea ceremony. Visible in the image are the kettle, the hearth (ro), and the tea bowl



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## Tea and Politics: England & American Colonies

Boston Tea Party an incident precipitating American War of Independence  
Rebellious colonists in Indian disguise destroy shipment of tea protesting tax  
May have been responsible for reducing tea consumption in US  
US since committed to coffee; now soft drinks

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## England and China

Increasing usage in England based on importations of tea from China  
British East India Company granted monopoly to control the trade in tea between England and China  
Great publicity followed first shipments of tea by sailing ships  
Trade favored China who demanded payment in gold

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# History of Horticulture

England sought to leverage position in India by trading opium grown in India

English considered opium a minor vice perhaps similar to our feeling concerning alcohol and tobacco

The opium habit had entered China from India but the Chinese grew concerned (similar to our concern over South American cocaine and Afghanistan heroin)

Emperor found the habit reprehensible and prohibited importation in 1729 and 1800 and the habit was in decline

However, China had not the power to prevent importation by British

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They insisted British traders put up bond to ensure compliance with prohibition on opium imports, and destroy stocks

English found these measures arbitrary, dictatorial, and unacceptable!!

Armed conflict began from 1839 to 1844, known as the Opium Wars

China lost and ceded Hong Kong to British control

The Opium wars strengthened English claims on China followed by other western countries

Led to other revolts such as the Boxer Rebellion

The story of tea is not dissimilar to the story of oil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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